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CELEBRATED SANCTUARIES

OF

THE MADONNA.

BY

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President of St. Mary's College, Oscott.

DIGNARE ME LAUDARE TE, VIRGO SACRATA;
DA MIHI VIRTUTEM CONTRA HOSTES TUOS.

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SOME of the histories in this volume were written whilst I was yet a layman, and appeared at various intervals in the 'Rambler' of 1850-52. For many years past I have been pressed by some of my brother clergy to republish them as pious reading for the month of May. I have now selected a few for this purpose, having first corrected, abridged, or enlarged them; but the larger half of the volume is quite new, and has been written by a friend who has already made many valuable contributions to English Catholic literature.

J. S. N.

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CELEBRATED SANCTUARIES

OF

THE MADONNA.

*What is a Sanctuary?*

EARLY in the fifth century—probably A.D. 404—the congregation of the faithful in a town on the coast of Africa were much disturbed by the rumour of a scandal in the episcopal palace. The details of the story were imperfectly known, and of course variously told ; but the distress of the little flock was so great that at last the Bishop published a Pastoral on the subject. In this Pastoral he lamented that there should be any necessity for an episcopal exhortation on occasions like the present ; he urged that the distinct prophecies of our Blessed Lord ought to have prepared men's minds for such exhibitions of human weakness and malice ; nevertheless, he confessed that they were trials dangerous to the weak, painful to all, and that therefore he would gladly have spared his flock the knowledge of what had happened, if this had been possible. Now, however, that false reports were afloat, it was better that they should know the facts, which were briefly these :—

A priest of his household, named Boniface, had brought a grave charge of immorality against another inmate of the house, who was not yet a priest, but desirous of becoming one. The charge was denied, and met by a counter-charge ; nevertheless, the Bishop had a strong impression that it was true. But, being unable to prove it, he determined to take no further action until something should happen either to justify or to

dispel his suspicions. The accused person, however, was not so patient; he was very urgent with the Bishop that he should ordain him, or, if he would not do it himself, that he would at least give him letters commendatory to some other diocese. The Bishop would not be persuaded to do either of these things. 'Then let Boniface be suspended or deposed,' was the rejoinder; 'if the suspicion of evil which attaches to me is a legitimate impediment to my receiving holy orders, it ought with equal justice to hinder my accuser from exercising the functions of those orders, seeing that the same charge is pending over him also.' Boniface was willing to submit even to this cruel privation rather than disturb the peace of the Church. But the Bishop would not have it so. 'I chose therefore,' he says, 'a certain middle course; to wit, that both parties should bind themselves to go to a sanctuary (*ad locum sanctum*), where the terrible operations of God are wont more readily to manifest an unsound and guilty conscience, and to force sinners to confession, either by some visible judgment or by the apprehension of it. I know indeed,' he proceeds, 'that God is everywhere, and that He who created all things is not contained or confined in any single place; I know too that He must be worshipped by those who would worship Him aright, in spirit and in truth; that so, hearing in secret, He may also justify and reward in secret. Nevertheless, it is seen and known by all men that He does set a difference between one place and another, though none can penetrate His counsel and explain why it is that *miracles of this kind are wrought in one place and not in another*. The sanctity of the place where the body of St. Felix of Nola lies buried is abundantly notorious. To this place, then, I have directed these two persons to go, and I have made this selection, because I could more easily and with greater accuracy get letters from thence telling me anything that may happen to either of them by the Divine interposition. For I remember, when I was at Milan, there was a shrine (*memoria*) of certain saints there, at which demons were forced to declare themselves in a most wonderful and terrible way; and I knew the case of a thief who had gone there with the intention of clearing himself from a charge by perjury, but was, on the contrary, compelled to confess his

guilt, and make restitution of what he had stolen. Has Africa, then, no bodies of saints? And yet we never hear of such things happening here. For just as, according to the Apostle,* “not all have the gifts of healing, nor all the discerning of spirits,” so He who divideth to every man severally as He will has not willed that things of this kind should be done at all the shrines of the saints.

‘Although, therefore, I was unwilling cruelly and uselessly to distress you by communicating to you what was so grievous a burden to my own heart, yet God has willed it otherwise; and perhaps for this reason, that you may labour with me in prayer that He will vouchsafe to make manifest what is known to Himself in this matter, but concealed from us.’

Finally, the Bishop adds that, although he had not furnished Boniface with letters commendatory for his journey, this was only because Boniface in his humility was anxious that, where they were both unknown along the road, they might be treated alike. On the other hand, he says, ‘I have not dared to erase his name from the Clergy List, lest I should seem to offer an insult to the *Divine Power under whose examination the cause is now pending.*’

I need hardly say that the writer of this interesting Pastoral was the great St. Augustine,† and I think there will be found in it a fitting introduction and a sufficient apology for the following pages. It is quite clear that the Christian religion, as known and practised by the wisest and best in the beginning of the fifth century, contained, as an integral portion of itself, a special devotion towards certain Sanctuaries; that St. Augustine and his flock believed that it was the will of God to honour His saints by making more frequent or more wonderful manifestations of His presence in these places than in others, and that they did not hesitate to make this belief a practical rule of conduct in delicate and difficult circumstances. No wonder, therefore, that the Church of the eighteenth century condemned, as rash, mischievous, and contrary to the pious custom

* 1 Cor. xii.

† Epist. Class. II., Ep. 78, ad Cler. et Pop. Hipp. Op. vol. ii. p. 275, ed. Gaume.

of the faithful,* that declaration of the Synod of Pistoia which condemned all special *cultus* of one image of a saint in preference to another ; and that theologians lay it down,† as confessed by all doctors and placed beyond dispute, that God sets this mark of difference upon certain holy places according to His own hidden counsel, the reasons whereof we cannot understand, whilst yet we daily experience its blessed results.

The narratives which are collected in this volume presuppose, and are intended to illustrate and promote, the same belief. It has been no part, therefore, of its general design, to enter upon a critical examination of their exact historical truth. Numerous remarks indeed bearing upon this point, have been introduced here and there, as opportunity seemed to offer ; but the historical evidence has not been presented at any length, nor its accuracy examined in detail, excepting only in two or three instances. The most important of these is the Sanctuary of our Lady of La Salette ; and the reason for this selection is obvious. Its rise and growth belong to our own times ; there are here no old traditions whose origin is lost in the darkness of antiquity ; no ravages of fire and sword have destroyed the records of any intermediate period ; but the whole history lies open before us from beginning to end, all contained within the narrow compass of a few years. The thing has grown up, we might almost say, under our own eyes ; even the newspapers of the day, both English and foreign, gave publicity to the main outlines of the history from the very first, so that we have an opportunity of studying with the most minute exactness this rare phenomenon, the creation of a new sanctuary or place of pilgrimage. And this seemed to be an opportunity too valuable to be lost, since Protestant controversialists would have us believe that it is a matter which can be summed up in half a dozen words. Some idle tale of a dream, or vision, or miraculous cure, is first invented (they suppose) by a designing priest, or imagined by some weak-brained enthusiast ; then the ignorant and superstitious people instantly believe it ; the bishops and clergy move heaven and earth to encourage their credulity ; and behold,

* See Bull, 'Auctorem Fidei,' prop. 70.

† Canisius de B. M. V., pars iv. sect. 2, c. 24.

the whole thing is done. Born in obscurity and nurtured by priestcraft, the tale is forced into a sickly maturity, and begets a sanctuary and a pilgrimage, only by means of the most jealous vigilance and fostering care of its clerical guardians, who tenderly shelter it from every breath of opposition until the time for inquiry is past; and if in future ages some diligent antiquarian, about to write the history of the Church, should seek to investigate the first origin of the narrative so intimately connected with its foundation, he will find no written documents that can assist him in his researches, but only the uncertain voice of tradition, and he must be contented to say with the old historian of Rome, '*Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia (ecclesiarum) augustiora faciat.*'

To correct this false and mischievous impression the history of La Salette has been told at some length; so also has the history of the Holy House of Loreto, and the evidence regarding the numerous pictures in Rome which attracted so much attention towards the close of the last century. The histories of the other Sanctuaries have been written with less reference to the objections of critics; and if this variety in the mode of treatment of different parts of the same volume be felt as an inconsistency and a defect, yet perhaps it may also be found to have some compensating advantages. To the great mass of the Protestant public, I am afraid it matters little in what style such narratives are written; their supernatural character is accepted as conclusive evidence against their truth. 'We are sure,' such persons say, 'that the story must needs be false, because we are satisfied on *à priori* grounds that it cannot possibly be true.' In whatever style, therefore, the story is told, their criticism is already prepared. If it is told in the simple legendary style of earlier ages, the writer is set down as a mediæval dreamer, who lives in a charmed circle, mistakes visions for realities, and treats all the ordinary occurrences and accidents of life, as surrounded by mystery and marvel. If, on the other hand, an attempt is made to sift and arrange the evidence, to weigh arguments and allege proofs, immediately we are reminded that modern stories of miraculous events have not the naïve simplicity of the ancient

ones. They seem to endeavour to get too many details in order to prove their truth. 'La Salette,' it has been said,* 'may in some measure be classed with the tales of Cæsar; but the latter tells his stories as if he believes them, and in that he gives a lesson that may not be disadvantageous at the present time.'

Of course neither the style nor the matter of the following pages can find favour with critics of this stamp. I hope, however, that Catholics may read them with interest and profit. It is but too natural to the hearts of all of us to set limits on the modes and times of God's interference with the system of the world we live in, to think that it 'belongs only to those days of wonder when heaven and earth are confounded, as when His feet stood formerly on the Mount of Olives, and when all nations shall behold Him at the crack of doom.' Such narratives as are here told may serve at least to startle us out of this practical unbelief. May they also enkindle in some hearts a more tender love and devotion towards our Blessed and Immaculate Mother, a firmer confidence in her power, and a more lively sense of her ever-present help to deliver us from all dangers.

* 'Gentleman's Magazine,' January 1854, p. 16.

CHAPTER I.

THE STATES OF THE CHURCH.

1.—*St. Mary Major, Rome.*

ANCIENT WRITERS enumerate no fewer than one hundred churches in the city of Rome, dedicated, under various titles, to the honour of the Queen of Heaven. Sixty or seventy of these yet remain; and of most of them, were we to unfold their history, or even merely to explain their titles, the record would be found full of tales of interest. Some, indeed, are named merely after this or that particular mystery of her life, or attribute of her power—the Annunciation, for instance, or the Purification, or Sta. Maria della Consolazione, delle Grazie, della Sanità, &c. But of others, which owed their origin to public or private vows, to visions, to miraculous cures, and the like, the titles are by no means so simple and telling their own tale; on the contrary, each would require its own separate comment, thus: Santa Maria della Pace, della Vittoria, degli Angeli, &c. Others, again, have the titles of famous sanctuaries of the Madonna in other cities or countries, some memorial of which the Romans were anxious to have within their own city, such as Sta. Maria di Loreto, Monserrato, della Quercia, &c. Lastly, there are others which take their names only from their position, as Sta. Maria in Trastevere, commonly said to be the oldest of all Roman churches. The site on which it stands was taken possession of by the Christians in the days of Alexander Severus; it was an open unoccupied spot, used by the *popinariî*, or cooks, and the soldiers were in the habit of meeting here to eat, drink, and riot. How the Christians became possessed of it we do not know; but it is recorded that the *popinariî* made a formal complaint to the Emperor, and attempted to recover it. Their petition was

refused, the Emperor saying it was better that God should be worshipped there under any form than that the place should be occupied by such worthless characters.

The Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, however, claims our first attention; for its fame extends throughout the whole Church; the feast of its dedication being everywhere commemorated on the 5th of August, and the miraculous circumstance attending its foundation indicated to all by the very title of the Feast, *Stæ. Mariæ ad Nives*.

About the middle of the fourth century, a wealthy Roman and his wife, being now of an advanced age, and having no children, determined to consecrate their wealth to the honour and glory of God, and specially they desired to dedicate it in some way to our Blessed Lady, but they found it difficult to decide on the best mode of carrying their purpose into execution. They were urgent, therefore, in their prayers to God, that He would be pleased to vouchsafe them some special token of His will for their guidance; and at length their prayers were answered. In the same night they both dreamed a dream, in which the Blessed Virgin bade them build a church to her honour upon that part of the Esquiline Hill which they should find on the morrow covered with snow. This happened on the 4th of August, just at that season when the heat of an Italian summer is reaching its culminating point. The good Roman, however, nothing doubting of the reality of the vision, hastened to communicate it to the Pope; and there, to his great surprise, he found that he had been anticipated in his intelligence, for that Pope Liberius had already received the same revelation in the same way; just as in the case of St. Peter and Cornelius, a vision was vouchsafed to each that they might be assured of God's will in a matter in which they were required to co-operate. The Pope then, accompanied by several of his clergy, and by this John and his friends, at whose expense the church was to be built, proceeded forthwith to the Esquiline, where everything appeared exactly as had been foretold to them. Not only was the ground covered with snow, spite of the heat of the weather, but this strange phenomenon was confined within certain limits; it covered a piece of ground of the form and size necessary for a church, and no more; just

as in the signs vouchsafed to Gedeon, 'there was dew on the fleece only, and it was dry on all the ground beside;' and again, 'it was dry on the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.'

Such is the ancient story of the foundation of this Basilica; and although it does not enter into our plan to institute a minute examination into the evidence upon which the story rests, nevertheless it may not be amiss to shield ourselves from all rash criticism by the authority of Benedict XIV., who says, in his account of the festival in which it is yearly commemorated, that 'it must be acknowledged that nothing is wanting to enable us to affirm with moral certainty that the prodigy of the snow is true.' The Romans have a very pretty mode of perpetuating its memory, which is worth recording: a shower of blossoms of the jasmine is made to fall from the roof of the Basilica during the celebration of the First Vespers, and again during the High Mass, and allowed to remain upon the pavement until the feast is ended. By such means as these, pious traditions of this kind live among the Roman poor, and are 'familiar to them as household words,' instead of being buried in the lessons of the Breviary, or known only to curious antiquarians.

However, to return to our history, the foundations of the new Basilica were immediately laid, and before the end of that pontificate the whole building was completed, so as to be known for many years as the Basilica Liberiana, after the name of its consecrator. In the early part of the following century was celebrated the General Council of Ephesus, and Sixtus III. took occasion of that memorable decision of the Church whereby the Blessed Virgin was declared to be truly the Mother of God, to rebuild this Basilica to her honour on a scale of much greater magnificence, whence it was afterwards called Basilica Sixti. At the same time he enriched it with numerous silver patens and chalices, lamps, thuribles, and other articles of church-furniture in the same costly material; with houses also and lands of considerable extent. The tribune, too, of the new Basilica was ornamented with very large and elaborate mosaics, representing various subjects, historical and symbolical, all more or less commemorative

of that mystery of the faith which had just been vindicated from the blasphemous attacks of heresy. In the middle of the seventh century a famous relic, the manger in which the infant Jesus had been laid in the stable at Bethlehem, having been brought here from the East, once more changed the title of the church, and gave it that of *Sta. Maria ad Præsepe*. It does not concern us to describe the later gifts of pontiffs and others, whereby the church was more and more embellished, until it attained its present magnificence; the first gold from Peru, wherewith the roof was enriched during the pontificate of Alexander V., the highly ornamented chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, which was erected two centuries later by Pope Sixtus V., the additions of Benedict XIV. in the last century, &c. &c. That which more immediately concerns our present subject is the picture, set in a frame of lapis-lazuli and precious stones, which stands in a niche over the principal altar of that most magnificent chapel, so well known as the *Capella Borghese*. It is one of those portraits of the Madonna which tradition assigns to St. Luke; and although Protestants generally receive all mention of such a tradition with tokens of the utmost incredulity, it certainly is not overthrown by the arguments usually alleged against it. One writer, indeed, notorious for his recklessness of assertion, and as ignorant apparently of the history of art as he is of the doctrines of the Catholic faith, has ventured to say 'that at the beginning of the art of painting (!), between the time of Cimabue and Giotto, there lived an artist whose name was Luke. He was a holy man, according to the holiness of his times, and confined himself to painting pictures of the Virgin Mary. The pictures popularly attributed to St. Luke are certainly belonging to that age, as every judge of the art is aware; and as this Luke was called the Holy Luke, i.e. St. Luke, he soon became confounded by the roguish monks and ignorant people with the St. Luke the Evangelist.'* Even Mrs. Jameson's account of the matter is not very different, only more moderately expressed, for her knowledge of art prevented her from falling into the ludicrous mis-statement as to the chronology of the paintings in question. She assigns to them an Oriental, rather than an

* Hobart Seymour's '*Pilgrimage to Rome*,' p. 567.

European origin, and believes that the idea that St. Luke was a painter came into the West after the first Crusades, 'with many other superstitions and traditions.' 'It may have originated,' she says, 'in the real existence of a Greek painter named Luca—a saint, too, he may have been, for the Greeks have a whole calendar of canonized artists, painters, poets, and musicians—and this Greek San Luca may have been a painter of those Madonnas imported from the ateliers of Mount Athos into the West by merchants and pilgrims; and the West, which knew but of one St. Luke, may have easily confounded the painter and the Evangelist.'

Some Catholic writers have at various times adopted this same theory; they have even gone so far as to name the precise date, some period in the eleventh century, when they assert that a painter, named Luke, really lived, and that amongst other works he painted the figure of our Blessed Lady in the Sanctuary dell' *Impruneta* in the diocese of Florence. But however this may be, Tiraboschi* has shown very clearly that the tradition which represents St. Luke the Evangelist as having executed portraits of the Blessed Virgin is far more ancient than this: it is mentioned by the disciple and biographer of St. Theodorus Studites, in the ninth century,† and in various writings published on occasion of the Iconoclast heresy at a still earlier date. Other writers therefore have accounted for the existence of the tradition in a different way. 'The delineations in St. Luke's Gospel,' it is said, 'partake of the nature of painting, inasmuch as the poetry of painting consists in bringing out and grouping and setting before the eyes, those things which are expressive of the unseen, of feelings beyond everyday life or common description; and thus metaphorically he may be considered as a painter, as abounding in the graphic scenes of a painter or a poet;‡ and as he is 'the great authority,' adds Mrs. Jameson, 'for the few Scripture particulars relating to the character and life of Mary, he may be said, in the figurative sense, to have painted her portrait.'

* Storia della Letter. Ital. tom. iii. lib. 4, c. 8, § 5.

† Sismondi, Op. tom. v. p. 44, ed. Paris.

‡ Rev. Isaac Williams, 'Thoughts on the Study of the Holy Gospels,' p. 71.

On the other hand, those who uphold the literal truth of the tradition, lay stress upon the unquestionable fact of the Evangelist's superior education, which (says St. Jerome*) was Grecian rather than Jewish; and if it be true, as is generally supposed, that he was born and educated in Antioch, a city remarkable for the refined habits and cultivated intellect of its inhabitants, nothing is more probable than that he should have learned the art of painting as a part of his secular education. But if so, and if he was only called to a knowledge of the Gospel by St. Paul, it is objected that he could not have had much opportunity of conversing with the Mother of Jesus.

It is not necessary to discuss the details of this question any further; it must always remain uncertain, and of course the authenticity of this or that painting in particular must be still more doubtful. The Lessons of the Office approved for the use of the Chapter of St. Mary Major's, speak of it as a pious belief, warranted by an old and constant tradition; and to contradict a received opinion of this kind without necessity, betokens conceit rather than true wisdom. Local tradition says of this particular picture that it was brought from Jerusalem to Rome by the Empress St. Helen, and placed in this church by Pope Liberius himself. Anyhow, it is of very high antiquity, and has always been revered with singular devotion by the Roman people. It was this picture which St. Gregory the Great was bearing in solemn procession from St. Mary Major's to St. Peter's, deprecating God's wrath, and imploring the interference of His mercy to stay the plague by which the city was being depopulated, when choirs of angels were heard around it, singing—

‘ Regina cœli, lætare,
Quia Quem meruisti portare
Resurrexit sicut dixit,’

to which the holy Pontiff immediately subjoined, *Ora pro nobis Deum*; thus forming the whole of that triumphant antiphon, wherewith, amid her own exultation at the glad tidings of Easter, the Church still celebrates the joys of the Mother of

* Comment. in Isai. lib. iii. c. 6.

her risen Lord, and prays her intercession. At the same time was revealed to the eyes of St. Gregory, over the Mausoleum of Hadrian (for the procession was just then about to cross the Tiber), the Archangel Michael sheathing his sword, and thereby declaring, what the fact afterwards confirmed, that the plague had ceased; that God had had pity on the affliction, and, as in the days of David, had 'said to the angel that slew the people, It is enough; now hold thy hand.'

This picture was most carefully preserved and had in reverence by all succeeding Pontiffs and by the faithful generally, until at length, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Paul V. determined to build a chapel expressly for its reception. The ceremony of translating it from its old position in another part of the Basilica to this new and most splendid chapel was celebrated with extraordinary pomp, and amid an immense concourse of the people, on the 27th of January, 1613; and in a brief, dated in the autumn of the following year, the Pope sufficiently indicates the motives by which he had been influenced, when he says that 'ancient records testify that this picture has been always distinguished by the devotion of the faithful, and that many and wonderful miracles have proceeded from it.'

It would take too long to enumerate instances: these must be sought in books which treat expressly of the subject. And, after all, no individual examples that might be alleged could furnish so satisfactory a proof of the assertion as is to be found in the persevering devotion of the faithful, more especially of the sovereign Pontiffs themselves. It was reported, apparently on good authority, in the early years of the present Pontiff's reign, and whilst he resided at the Quirinal, that he might be sometimes seen, in the silent hours of the night, walking barefooted, and attended by a few faithful companions, to pour forth his prayers for help amid his already multiplying troubles in this favoured sanctuary. But whether this be true or not, the devotion of his immediate predecessor to this picture is sufficiently notorious. What was done in the days of the first Gregory was repeated in the days of the last; and twice within the space of four or five years the inhabitants of the Eternal City saw the very same picture carried along their

streets which their forefathers had seen and revered more than twelve centuries before, and for the very same purpose—to implore the Mother of God to intercede with her divine Son, and remove from among them the plague of sickness. On the last occasion—the cessation of the cholera in 1837—the Pope made an offering of two golden crowns, richly ornamented with precious stones (one for the Mother, the other for the Son), to replace the crowns of silver which had been offered by various Popes in former times from Clement VIII. downwards, but which had all been lost during some of the numerous political disturbances to which the city has been so often subjected.

In concluding the account of this first and most famous sanctuary of the Madonna, deservedly called St. Mary Major (*'quia major dignitate non solum Romanis, sed et totius orbis Ecclesiis,'* as Canisius says), it is worth while, perhaps, to notice the remark of a Protestant traveller, that 'the people of Italy are not much influenced by a taste for the arts in their religion; that they not unfrequently select the very ugliest Madonnas and the most hideous crucifixions'—(we are using *his* words, not our own)—'as the objects of their worship;' and that the *spiritual* history, so to speak, of any image 'has far more to do with increasing the number of devout pilgrims and pious worshippers than the most exquisite handling of the pencil, or the most perfect finishing of the chisel.' The latter part of this remark is undoubtedly true—and who, indeed, could wish it to be otherwise?—but as to the former part, whatever may be its general accuracy, at least in the present instance it is quite inapplicable. All who have had the privilege of contemplating the picture at St. Mary Major's at all closely, bear testimony to its extremely pleasing and devotional character. It is said to be as beautiful as it is famous.

2.—*Our Lady of Good Counsel, Genazzano.*

GENAZZANO is a town of some importance in the diocese of Palestrina, very prettily situated on the left of the high road to Naples, at a distance of about thirty miles to the south-east of Rome. From time immemorial, the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist was celebrated there as a very special holiday ; in fact, it was the day of the great fair or market of the year. Moreover, there was a very old church in the city, dedicated to the Madonna of Good Counsel, built, as it would appear, upon a part of the territory that Pope Sixtus III. had conveyed as an endowment to St. Mary Major's in Rome, on the occasion which has been already mentioned of his rebuilding that Basilica. In the middle of the fifteenth century this church was in the hands of the Augustinians, to whom it had been given, in the year 1356, by some member of the Colonna family, the feudal lords of the place. It was neither large nor handsome ; and about the time we have named, a devout old woman, named Petruccia da Jeneo, a native of Genazzano, and a member of the Third Order of St. Augustine, declared her determination to rebuild it on a scale of greater magnificence. Her means were wholly unequal to the task ; nevertheless, such as they were, she devoted them entirely to the work. She went and sold all that she had, and the undertaking was begun. Her friends and neighbours laughed her to scorn, as one who had begun to build without ' having first sat down and reckoned the charges that were necessary, whether she had wherewithal to finish it.' Her relations—not without some suspicion of a selfish regard to their own interests as the motive of their interference—rebuked her sharply for her improvidence, in thus voluntarily depriving herself of those means of support with which God had blest her in the time of her greatest necessity ; she was old and infirm, they said, and who would undertake the burden of her support, since her impoverishment had been the result of a

foolish indulgence of her own fancy? Her answer to these objections was always the same: 'The work will be finished, and that right soon, because it is not *my* work, but God's; the Madonna and St. Augustine will do it before I die;' and she continually repeated, with an air of confidence, what may have seemed the ravings of madness to those who heard her, 'Oh, what a *Gran Signora* (what a noble lady) will soon come and take possession of this place!'

Meanwhile the work proceeded, and the walls had already risen high above the ground, close to the old church which they were intended to enclose; but by and by the builders ceased; and now there arose a far greater obstacle than the mere insufficiency of means. Petruccia had in fact declared that she had begun her undertaking, and was encouraged to persevere with it, mainly in reliance upon some secret inspiration, vision, or revelation (it does not clearly appear which), that she believed herself to have received from God; and the Church, in order to guard against abuses which had sometimes arisen from giving heed to pretended supernatural messages of this kind, had now issued a law forbidding such things to be attended to, unless they were corroborated by some other external and independent testimony; the mere assertion of a dream, a vision, or a revelation, was on no account to be obeyed.* Petruccia's work, therefore, was not only suspended for want of means, it was also canonically prohibited. Her own substance had been exhausted, and an appeal to the assistance of others the ecclesiastical authorities could not permit. Matters were in this state in the spring of 1467. On Saturday, April 25, in that year, the usual fair had been held; crowds of people had passed and repassed the old church, and the imperfect walls of the new; and we cannot doubt but that some at least amongst those who saw them had begun to mock, saying, 'This woman began to build, and was not able to finish.' Evening was fast approaching, the gayest, brightest hour of the fair, when, business being ended, the pleasure of the day began: all were devoting themselves to amusement, each in his own way, when presently some

* Quæ per somnia et inanes revelationes quorumlibet hominum ubicumque constituuntur altaria, omnino reprobentur.

who stood in the *piazza* saw something like a thin cloud floating in the air, and then settling on one of the walls of the unfinished building. Here the cloud seemed to divide and disappear, and there remained upon the wall a picture of the Madonna and Child, which had not been there before—a picture which was new to all the bystanders, and which they could not in any way account for. At the same moment the bells of the church, and of all the other churches in the town, began to sound, yet no human hand is seen to touch them. People ran from their houses to ask the cause of this general alarm; and indistinct rumours spread rapidly amongst them that something wonderful had happened in the Piazza della Madonna. Those who were nearest to the spot arrived just in time to see the aged Petruccia come out from the church, to inquire like the rest what had happened. When she had seen the picture, she threw herself on her knees and saluted it with outstretched arms; then she rose, and turning round to the people, told them with a voice half choked with tears of joy and gratitude, that this was the *Gran Signora* whom she had so long expected, that she was now come to take possession of the church that ought to have been prepared for her, and that the bells were sounding in this miraculous way only to do her honour. At this intelligence the people fell upon their knees, and began to pour forth their prayers before this marvellous painting, which they knew not how otherwise to designate than as the *Madonna del Paradiso*.

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, alarmed by the unusual sound of the bells, accompanied (as is still the custom in many parts of Italy on all festive occasions) by the discharge of fire-arms, imagined that some disturbance must have broken out in the city, and began to feel no little anxiety for those of their relations and friends who were absent at the fair. Some, indeed, had already returned, but these were as much at a loss as the rest; for when they came away they had seen no symptoms of a riot, neither had they heard of any extraordinary cause of rejoicing. Others, again, had left the city, and were in the act of returning homewards, when their steps were arrested by these noises; and of these, some whose

prudence was stronger than their curiosity only hurried home the faster, whilst others turned back to investigate the cause. These, however, tarried so long to gaze at the wondrous sight, to hear its history, and to see the marvellous effects that followed, that the public anxiety of the neighbourhood was still unrelieved. At length, at a very late hour of the night, some few stragglers returned, and told so strange a tale, that long before daybreak on the following morning multitudes of the country people might be seen taking advantage of the day of rest (it was the fourth Sunday after Easter) and hurrying towards the town to see and inquire for themselves. And not only the strong and the active, but even the aged and infirm, the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others, came or were brought to this new pool of Bethsaida; for it was part of the intelligence which reached them that many persons had been miraculously healed of their infirmities in the presence of this Madonna. So great was the number of these miraculous cures, that with a methodical caution and prudence most unusual in a Catholic country and at a time when Protestantism was unknown, a notary was appointed to register the principal cases, and to have them attested by the signatures of competent witnesses, and of the very parties themselves. This register was begun on the second day after the apparition, i.e. on April 27, and continued until August 14. It contains the narration of 171 reputed miracles, which had taken place during this period of 110 days; and it was stopped at last, not because the marvels had ceased, but because enough had now been done to silence the mouths of the most obstinate of gainsayers, and to establish the right of this picture to be considered an *Immagine miracolosa*.

But it is time that we should inquire somewhat more particularly whence this picture had really been brought, and by what means. The inhabitants of Genazzano would fain believe that it was the work of angels and had been brought from heaven, and for this reason they had given it the name of the Madonna del Paradiso. It was no welcome news to them, therefore, a few days afterwards, to be told that two strangers from a foreign land had just arrived from Rome, who professed to know the picture, and to be able to tell its history.

One of these strangers was a Sclavonian, the other an Albanian; and the story which they told was this.

They had been resident together in Scutari, a city of Albania, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, distant about twenty miles from the sea. On a little hill outside that city there was a church, in which this Madonna, painted upon the wall, was well known, and much venerated, as the Madonna del Buon Officio. It was a picture to which there had always been a very great devotion; and latterly, in the disturbed miserable condition of the country, the inhabitants had been more than usually frequent in their visits to it, entreating the Madonna's interference to defend them from their dangerous enemies, the Turks, who, they had reason to apprehend, were meditating a fresh invasion, and who, as a matter of fact, did, not many years afterwards, lay waste the whole country, and destroy many cities with fire and sword. Numbers of the citizens had already fled from the impending calamity; and, as contemporary historians tell us, took refuge, some in Venice, others in different cities of Romagna. Amongst the rest, our two strangers at length determined to expatriate themselves like their neighbours; but before doing so, they went out to bid a last farewell to their favourite shrine, and to pray the Mother of God that, as she with her Divine Son had been forced to flee from the face of one of the kings of the earth who was plotting mischief against them, so she would vouchsafe to guide and to accompany these her humble clients, in their no less compulsory flight. Whilst they were yet praying the picture disappeared from their sight, and in its stead a white cloud seemed to detach itself from the wall, to float through the air, and to pass out through the doors of the church. Attracted by an impulse which they could not resist, they followed; presently they found themselves caught up in some mysterious manner along with it, and carried forwards in its company. The manner of their transit who shall explain, save He who alone can tell how the angel of the Lord set Habacuc in Babylon over the lion's den where Daniel was imprisoned, 'in the force of his Spirit,'* and how he presently set him again in his own place in Judea; or how, when Philip

* Dan. xv. 35.

and the eunuch were come up out of the water, 'the Spirit of the Lord took away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing, but Philip was found at Azotus.'* The men themselves could only testify that they had been transported, they knew not how, from one place to another; that they had been taken across the Adriatic, whose waves had borne them up, as the Sea of Galilee had borne St. Peter when Jesus bade him come to Him upon the waters; that, as evening drew on, that which had seemed a pillar of a cloud by day became as it were a pillar of fire; and that finally, when they had been brought to the gates of Rome, it entirely disappeared.

Entered into the Eternal City, the travellers sought diligently for traces of their lost guide; they went from one church to another, inquiring for the picture which they had watched so long, and then so suddenly lost sight of; but all their inquiries were in vain. At length, at the end of two or three days, they heard of a picture having appeared in a strange way at Genazzano, and that its appearance was followed by many miracles. Immediately they set out to visit it; recognised and proclaimed its identity. The people of Genazzano lent no willing ear to this strange history; it detracted somewhat from the heavenly origin which they would have assigned to their newly-gotten treasure; and it gave them some uneasiness too as to the ultimate security of their possession of it; for, should this story be authenticated, the picture might one day be reclaimed and carried away. In the course of a few days, however, as the story got noised abroad, other Albanians, who were scattered abroad in different parts of Italy, came to see it; and these too confirmed its identity. At a later date, this fact was still more clearly ascertained (as in the somewhat similar case of the House of Loreto) by the testimony of persons who spoke upon oath, not only to the exact shape and size, as corresponding to a blank that was then still to be seen upon the walls of the church at Scutari, but also to the colouring and style of art, as precisely the same with that which characterised all the other parts of the church. For it must be remembered, that this was no

* Acts viii. 39, 40.

painting executed upon board or canvas, and thus capable of easy removal, and leaving no trace behind it; it was a mere fresco upon a very thin coating of plaster, which no human skill could have detached from the wall in a single piece, still less have transported from one place to another without injury.

But to adhere more closely to the chronological order of our facts, it is necessary that we should return to Rome. It was scarcely possible that so marvellous a story, circulated in the immediate neighbourhood of the Holy See, should fail to attract the attention of that ever-watchful, jealous tribunal. The translation of the picture is said to have taken place late on the evening of the 25th April; on the 15th of May, and following days, the names of certain Albanians appear in the register which has been already mentioned, as having received remarkable *grazie* at the shrine, and these were they who confirmed one part of the strangers' tale by identifying the picture; and before the middle of July we find Pope Paul II. sending two bishops to examine upon the very spot into all the circumstances of the case. The Bishop of Palestrina, whose duty it would naturally have been to institute this examination, was Cardinal Cortin, a Frenchman; but as he was absent at Avignon, the Pope appointed in his stead another French bishop, who happened to be in Rome, and must have been well known to the Cardinal, being Bishop of Gap, in Dauphiny, Monsignor Gaucer; and with him was joined Monsignor Niccolò de Crucibus, Bishop of Lesina, one of the islands in the Adriatic near the coast of Dalmatia, whose familiarity as well with the language as with the localities could not fail to be of the utmost service in the investigation of this matter. The mission of these bishops is not only recorded by contemporary writers,* it is also curiously attested by the records of the Papal Treasury, which are still extant, and where we read, under the date of the 24th July in this year, an item of twenty-two florins and sixty bolognini 'paid for the expenses of two bishops sent to Genazzano.' †

* e. g. M. Canesius, in his *Life of Paul II.*, written in the year 1469.

† Cod. dell' Arch. Seg. Vat. *delle spese fatte nel 1464*, p. 231. See the testimony of Marini, apud Riccardi, '*Santuari d' Italia*,' ii. 543.

It is much to be regretted that the report which these bishops presented upon their return to Rome has nowhere been preserved to us; its general character, however, is unmistakeable, if we consider the facts which followed. Had not their report been favourable, the register of miracles would not have been continued, as we know that it was, until the middle of the succeeding month, and then its separate sheets collected together, and the whole copied *de novo* into a single volume by another notary, with a title in which the miraculous appearance of the picture is expressly mentioned. Again, had not their report been favourable, those two strangers, who would then have been convicted of imposture, could not have dared to establish themselves, as they undoubtedly did, in the very town which they had attempted to deceive. (The family of the Albanian still remains; the other has been long extinct.) But above all, had not their report been favourable, the work of the new church would not have been resumed; resumed and completed in less than three years; and then bearing among its ornaments inscriptions, paintings, and sculptures, many of which still remain, and all distinctly commemorate the same wonderful story.

The entire history of this sanctuary, and of the miracles which have been wrought there, of the devotional visits of Popes, Cardinals, and other princes, and of the offerings which they have sent or left behind them, is very interesting. The visit of Pope Urban VIII. is specially worth mentioning, because that Pope set his face so resolutely against the sanctioning in any way of miraculous stories resting on no sufficient foundation, yet came to this church in 1630 on purpose that he might pray before this picture for the averting of the plague, then raging in other parts of Italy, from his own dominions. We may add also that in 1777 the Congregation of Rites approved a proper office, commemorating this history, to be used by all the Augustinian Order; and that the devotion towards the picture is very far from having died away, as sometimes happens, by the lapse of years. It has always been a favourite place of pilgrimage for our own ecclesiastical students in the English College at Rome, and Cardinal Acton had a special devotion towards it. On occasion of his visit to it in the

autumn of 1845, he met with an accident which might well have proved fatal both to himself and his companions. He was travelling from Palestrina with his chaplain and servants, and three students of the English College * (a party of eight in all), when the carriage was upset in a very dangerous part of the road. Carriage, horses, and passengers were precipitated over a bank to the depth of twenty feet; 'yet,' as one of the party writes, 'not one of us had so much as a scratch, as far as I know, and I never heard mention of injury to any, except that the butler, who was more frightened than hurt, complained of being much shaken. Of course, he and the others outside were flung some way into the field; we who were inside fell on one another, the Cardinal being immediately below me. The carriage windows were thrown up by the fall, but were unbroken until men came and broke them to drag us out. The carriage was not much injured; some of the iron-work twisted, and the pole broken, which caused a deep flesh-wound in one of the horses. We walked on, saying the rosary, to the neighbouring town, where the Bishop received us, and sent us on to Genazzano. On our arrival there, the Rector and students and the religious community all joined us in the *Te Deum*, which was repeated on the following morning, for the miraculous deliverance which a good God had given us.' The Cardinal had a copy of the painting executed, which he always retained for his own private devotion, and which is now in the sacristy of the Church of our Lady of Angels, Stoke-upon-Trent. Another copy, or rather a very beautiful painting (by Seitz), suggested by it, and retaining the same general idea and attitude of the Mother and Child, is in the chapel of the Convent of St. Catherine, at Clifton. Very many copies may be seen, not only in the churches of Rome and other states of Italy, but in Spain and Portugal, in Istria and Dalmatia, and even in Africa and America. As to the title of this painting, it was for some time a subject of considerable dispute, some wishing to retain that which had been given at first by the devotion of the people, the *Madonna del Paradiso*; others, again, advocating the more historical description,

* All still surviving, and priests in the dioceses of Liverpool and Salford.

Madonna da Scutari. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the revival of the ancient title has universally prevailed; and those of our readers who are familiar either with the picture itself or with any of its copies, will agree with us in considering it a most happy selection. There is something in the attitude of the Mother and Child that renders the title peculiarly appropriate and impressive.

3.—*Our Lady of La Quercia, Viterbo.*

At a short distance from the walls of Viterbo, on a spot formerly known as the Campo Grazzano, stands the celebrated convent of La Quercia, with its beautiful campanile, rising above the trees which line the road leading to the Porta Santa Lucia. The church with its adjacent cloister, designed by Bramante, is considered a masterpiece of that artist, and its situation would seem as if chosen in order to command the most magnificent view. The woody heights of Mount Cimino rise on the south, on the north appear the town and hills of Montefiascone; the Apennines are on the east, whilst in the opposite direction you look over a richly variegated country towards the distant Mediterranean. However, the site of the convent was not fixed on in consequence of its picturesque beauty; it was determined by what may be called accidental circumstances, unless our readers are willing to believe that, as is affirmed of so many other sanctuaries of Our Lady, she herself made choice of the spot whence she had determined to dispense her graces.

It was in the year 1417, during the lamentable period known as the Great Schism, that a certain artist named Baptista Juzzante fastened a picture of the Madonna painted on a tile to an oak tree, which then grew on the Campo Grazzano. The picture represents the half-figure of Our Lady dressed in a crimson vest, and wearing a blue mantle, supporting her Divine Son, who appears clothed in a yellowish-coloured tunic, and holds a little bird in his right hand. Baptista is said to have placed it in the tree 'by Divine Inspiration,' but in point of fact there was nothing very extraordinary in this circum-

stance. Pictures and images of Our Lady were very commonly thus placed, for the devotion of wayfarers, like the 'Virgin of the Oak' at Norwich, and in some cases have been discovered imbedded in the wood, which, in process of time, has grown over and concealed them from view. For several years the picture of which we are speaking did not attract any particular attention, though the peasants who sometimes paid their devotions before it on their way to and from the city affirmed in their simplicity that, however often it was blown down by the wind, it was always replaced uninjured on the oak without the aid of human hands, and they noticed what they deemed the marvellous way in which the branches of the tree interlaced one another, so as gradually to form a sort of niche, thoroughly overarching and protecting the Madonna from wind, snow, and rain. However, it did not long remain undisturbed in its oaken tabernacle. Not far from the spot, on one of the heights of Mount Cimino, known as Mount Saint Angelo, there lived a hermit named Pier Dominico Alberti. He was a Siennese by birth, but had abandoned the world, and taken up his abode in this solitude, whence it was his pious custom to come almost daily, in order to pay his devotions before the picture, which was by this time almost hidden by the luxuriant branches. At last the thought occurred to him of removing it to the chapel of his own hermitage, which he accordingly did, but that night, as he slept, he seemed in his dreams to see the picture hanging, as before, in the tree, and when he woke he found, to his astonishment, that it was actually gone from the place where he had carefully fixed it the night before. Hastening to the Campo Grazzano in some perplexity, his wonder was yet further increased on finding the Madonna restored to her former position, and supported in the tree by the hands of two angels. With many tears he hastened to implore Our Lady's pardon for his boldness in having removed her from her chosen home, and without openly declaring what had happened, he was from that time observed constantly to allude to some great treasure which existed between Viterbo and Bagnaia—a treasure, he said, which no one as yet knew or cared for; and when some of those to whom he thus spoke proposed to go and dig for it, he

would shake his head, and tell them their labour would be useless, for that the treasure was not hidden underground.

Meanwhile, some devout women of Viterbo had also discovered the picture, and one of them, named Bartolomea, conceived such a devout affection for it, that after one day praying before it for a long time she resolved, as the hermit had done, to remove it to her own house. But it very speedily found its way back to the oak, to the surprise of Bartolomea, who did not however at first perceive anything miraculous in the circumstance, but imagined that some of her family had been playing her a trick. She therefore again removed it, and this time to keep it more securely she locked it up in a box. But her precautions proved vain, for the first time she opened the box, she found the picture was no longer there, and hurrying to the oak-tree, she was stupefied with surprise and admiration on beholding the Madonna hanging in her sylvan tabernacle as before. She no longer doubted of the supernatural character both of this and the former removal, and, persuaded that the Blessed Virgin had made choice of this tree for her residence, and that she did not choose her picture to be venerated on any other spot, she not only left it where it was but hastened to exhort her neighbours to visit the picture before which she assured them she had received many graces.

A certain devotion towards the Madonna of the Oak had thus sprung up among the people of Viterbo, who were suffering from many calamities—as well from the factions and civil wars with which Italy was at that time distracted, as from the assaults of pestilence. In the July of the year 1467 the misery of the people seemed at its height, the mortality was daily increasing, when many of those who had been attacked by the pestilence were suddenly restored to health while praying before the Madonna della Quercia. On the 8th of the same month, a citizen of Viterbo flying from the pursuit of some of the opposite faction who sought his life, was overtaken by them just as he came up to ‘Our Lady’s Oak,’ and seeing no way of escape he raised his eyes to the picture and invoking the aid of the Blessed Virgin was not disappointed in his confidence. His pursuers, who a moment before believed themselves sure of their prey, suddenly lost

sight of him, they sought him everywhere around and even in the tree but in vain, and were forced to retrace their steps disappointed and somewhat terrified by what seemed his supernatural disappearance. Meanwhile, the citizen who had beheld the discomfiture of his enemies, could only explain it by supposing, as was indeed the case, that Our Lady had rendered him invisible to them, and entering Viterbo he published his miraculous escape to all his neighbours. The affair was much talked of, and the hermit explaining his former obscure hints, declared that the treasure he had so often spoken of was no other than Our Lady's picture, and made known its miraculous removal both from his own hermitage and the house of Bartolomea. The people of Viterbo determined in consequence solemnly to invoke Our Lady's intercession against the pestilence, which before the end of July entirely ceased. This almost instantaneous answer to their prayers filled them with devout gratitude, and crowds, amounting to forty thousand persons, poured out of the city to return thanks to Our Lady before her picture in the oak. On the first Sunday in August an immense procession, including fourteen religious communities, visited this new Sanctuary of the Madonna. The Bishop of Viterbo, at the head of all his clergy, secular and regular, and all the magistrates of the city, came hither and celebrated mass on a very simple wooden altar erected under the tree, and during this and the following month similar scenes were constantly repeated.

The fame of the Madonna della Quercia soon spread beyond Viterbo. The hermit Pier Dominico constituted himself the Apostle of the new devotion, and on occasion of a terrible series of earthquakes which about the same time threatened the ruin of the city of Siena, he exhorted the terrified people to make a vow to the Madonna della Quercia, and recommend themselves to her protection. The immediate cessation of this scourge proved the reward of their faith, and, as a token of gratitude, a deputation of Siennese citizens was dispatched to Viterbo bringing with them as their votive offering a silver tablet on which was engraved a representation of the city.

I shall not pause here to enumerate the miracles wrought

before the Holy Image. Their number and variety was expressed by the votive offerings of all kinds soon suspended before the oak, among which were to be seen the chains of more than one captive in Africa and Constantinople who attributed his deliverance from a Turkish dungeon to the intercession of Our Lady. But the votaries of the Madonna often affirmed that the picture itself was in reality the greatest miracle. Exposed for fifty years to every inclemency of weather under a tree the branches of which formed its sole protection, its colours were fresh and uninjured as on the first day it had been placed there. The majesty of Our Lady's countenance, and the life-like expression with which the Holy Child appeared to be looking down on his worshippers, struck all who gazed on it. Moreover, as they said, it excited different sentiments in the beholders, according to their different dispositions; it struck fear into the hearts of sinners, kindled compunction in others, inspired the timid with hope, and the devout with fervour. And its miraculous powers were believed to extend even to the oil burnt before the picture, and the wood of the tree on which it hung, several well-attested examples of cures wrought by their use being on record.

The throng of pilgrims who constantly visited the Madonna rendered it necessary to take some steps for providing priests to minister to their spiritual wants, and in 1467 a small chapel was erected for the celebration of Mass, the superiors of the Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian, and Servite convents being each severally requested to send one Father to hear the confessions of the people. Even this was not found to be sufficient, and in the October of the same year, the Bishop appointed four parish priests to fulfil the same ministry, other officers, chosen from the nobles of Viterbo, being named to receive the offerings of the pilgrims. At last he determined to establish some religious community on the spot, and a colony of the *Gesuati*, recently founded by St. John Colombini, were chosen for the purpose. But as they found themselves unequal to the work, which constantly increased, they resigned their post, and a council of the city authorities was called to determine who should be their successors. The Dominican

Fathers were thought by many the best suited for the charge, but as they already had one convent in Viterbo, that of Sta. Maria in Gradi, there appeared an objection to founding two of the same order in such close vicinity. To settle the point, it was at last agreed to send the priors, or city magistrates, to the Porta Santa Lucia, on the road which leads to Florence; they were to watch for the first stranger religious coming into the city by that road, and they determined that the Order to which he might happen to belong, whatever it were, should be selected as the guardians of the Madonna. Hardly had the priors taken their post at the gate, when three friars appeared in sight coming along the road from the direction of Florence. They were Father Martial Auribelli, Master-General of the Dominicans, accompanied by his *socîi*, returning from the visitation of the northern provinces. When the priors had accosted the strangers and ascertained their dignity and character, they were filled with a certain assurance that this was indeed the Order chosen by Our Lady, who appeared to have conducted hither the head of one of the principal Orders dedicated in the Church to her special honour, that her will in the matter might be manifested beyond the power of contradiction.

The care of the holy image, and the missionary labours thereby entailed, were accordingly offered by the citizens of Viterbo to the Master-General of the Friar-Preachers, and by him willingly accepted; and a bull confirming this arrangement was obtained from Pope Paul II., wherein faculties were granted for the erection of a church and convent. The foundations of the church were laid in the July of 1470, and such was the ardour of those engaged in the work, and the zeal with which the people contributed the necessary means, that the walls were roofed in by the following December; a fact considered sufficiently remarkable to be commemorated on a tablet still preserved.

To the church was added a spacious cloister and monastery, a hospital for the reception of pilgrims, and other buildings for the accommodation of the merchants and others, who assembled at the annual fairs held here twice a year. Roads were opened and planted with avenues of trees, and consider-

able lands enclosed as vineyards and olive-yards. Fountains and even aqueducts for the service of the friars and the public were constructed at vast expense, and the spot formerly so wild and solitary was rapidly changed into a handsome and flourishing suburb.

The Roman Pontiffs have vied one with another in their testimonies of devotion towards the Madonna della Quercia, and the privileges they have granted to this favoured sanctuary. Paul III. was accustomed to visit it every year of his pontificate, saying Mass at the Altar of Our Lady, and directed his statue should be placed before the holy picture, where it may still be seen. He even instituted a new order of knighthood under the peculiar protection of Our Lady, called the Order of the Lily, the members of which wore a golden collar and medal, on one side of which appeared a representation of the Madonna della Quercia. St. Pius V., himself a member of the Dominican order, often visited the convent, and granted many indulgences to those who should pay their devotions to the Madonna. When the fleet of the Christian allies was about to set sail for Lepanto, and extraordinary prayers were being made to Our Lady for its success, St. Pius despatched very special orders to the religious of La Quercia not to desist from their appeals to their holy patroness that she would obtain victory for the Christian arms. This was so well known at the time that after the victory of Lepanto an immense number of the combatants visited La Quercia to hang up votive offerings of thanksgiving, such as silver galleys and the like; and a picture may still be seen, representing the battle, wherein the Madonna della Quercia, who had been invoked by many of those engaged, appears protecting her votaries. The escape of one soldier, named Tomaso Roberti, had been specially remarkable. He had already fallen severely wounded, and was being rapidly covered over with the bodies of the dead, when he caught the sound of his comrades' voices shouting 'victory,' and, summoning his remaining strength, he invoked the aid of the Madonna della Quercia, whereupon he felt his wounds staunch and anointed as it seemed by some unseen hand, and in a few moments found himself perfectly restored; so that he was able to rise and free himself from the mass of

corpses under which he lay buried. He made a pilgrimage of gratitude to La Quercia, where he left a small statue of himself as a votive offering.

We might give a long list of the sovereign Pontiffs, cardinals, and princes, whose names are to be found enrolled among the pilgrims of La Quercia, and whose votive offerings, in the shape of silver tablets and statuettes, enriched the church before it was plundered in the sixteenth century by the sacrilegious ruffians under the command of the Constable de Bourbon. Or again we might speak of the great servants of God who refreshed their devotion before the altar of Mary, such as the blessed Colomba of Rieti, the blessed Lucy of Narni, and St. Hyacintha Marescotti, the latter of whom had a very special love of the Madonna della Quercia, and being unable, as an enclosed religious woman, to visit her sanctuary in person, was wont very often to do so by deputy, and sometimes engaged a number of young children to visit the church barefoot and communicate there for her intention. Sometimes she obtained leave for some devout person to be shut up in the holy chapel three days and three nights, in order uninterruptedly to implore for her divine grace and the powerful intercession of the Madonna. The history of the graces and miracles obtained at this sanctuary fill an entire volume. The circumstances of many of them are painted on the walls of the cloisters or represented in tablets, statues, and other offerings. These graces are of every variety, including miraculous cures, deliverances from wild beasts, fire, tempests, and earthquakes, restoration of the deaf and dumb, and escapes from Turkish slavery. Thus, a certain knight of Viterbo, named Papirio Buffi, being taken prisoner by the Moors, and kept in slavery in Africa, made his vows to Our Lady della Quercia, and soon after found means of escaping in a little skiff, which, altogether unsuited as it was for such a voyage, brought him safely to Civita Vecchia, in a wonderfully short space of time. To manifest his gratitude for this deliverance, and his firm faith that he was indebted for it to Our Lady, Papirio set out at once for La Quercia, wearing the same clothes in which he had landed, namely, the linen shirt and trousers of an African slave, and afterwards as his thank-

offering erected the marble chapel in which we see painted the appropriate subject of the escape of St. Raymund Pennafort.

Another class of miracles includes those who have invoked Our Lady's intercession when condemned to death, and whose subsequent release has been attributed to her intercession. I will give but one example of these, which rests upon the evidence of a multitude of eye-witnesses. In the year 1503, a certain citizen of Modena, named Fabrizio Padovani, was accused of theft, and being put to the torture, confessed the crime through extremity of pain, although he was in fact entirely innocent. He was accordingly condemned to death, but the confessor who assisted him in preparing him before execution felt satisfied of his innocence, and urged him to have recourse to Our Lady della Quercia, with full confidence in the power of her intercession. When the last hour came, Fabrizio addressed the assembled crowd from the scaffold, and declared his innocence of the crime for which he was to suffer, and at the same time asked them as a last charity to join with him in saying a Pater and Ave in honour of the Madonna della Quercia, that she might at least assist him in his agony. The spectators knelt down, and all repeated the prayer with him aloud; then the executioner fastened the rope round his neck, and threw him off the ladder. But at that moment the rope and gallows broke, bringing to the ground both the executioner and the criminal. The gallows were set up a second time, and firmly secured, but the same accident occurred again; whereupon the people raised a cry of 'A miracle! a miracle!' But this excitement did not prevent the executioner from taking measures for hanging his unfortunate prisoner a third time. Whilst he stood with the broken rope around his neck, some workmen leisurely set up the gallows, and fastened it with blocks and iron cramps, and once more Fabrizio was called on to ascend the ladder. But when the executioner was in the act of throwing him off, the gallows again gave way. Every one standing on the scaffold was thrown down, and the machinery was broken into several pieces. The magistrates who were present were so impressed by the extraordinary recurrence of

this accident that, yielding to the clamorous cries of the spectators, they remanded Fabrizio back to prison, and caused a fresh inquiry to be made into his case, which resulted in completely proving his innocence. On regaining his freedom his first act was to present an ex-voto offering to the Madonna della Quercia.

In our own days this sanctuary has attracted to itself a new interest from the fact of its having been chosen to receive the gallant little band of French religious, whose glorious vocation it was to restore the Dominican Order in their native land. In the convent of La Quercia Père Lacordaire and his first companions passed their year of noviciate, and resolved to choose the Madonna della Quercia as the patroness of their great undertaking. One of their number, an artist by profession, but whose name is now better known to the Catholic world by the sanctity of his life, Père Hyacinth Besson, made a copy of the miraculous picture, which was afterwards carried by the little colony into France, and solemnly placed on the altar of their convent at Nancy, the first house of the restored French province. The most illustrious orator of his time, who had been educated in the sceptical principles of modern France, did not consider it unworthy of great genius and profound philosophy to recognise the prodigious influence of the Sanctuaries of the Madonna, I will not say over popular faith, but over civilisation and moral progress. Père Lacordaire not only venerated the Madonna of his convent, and believed in its miraculous powers, but he loved to dwell on all the material good of which it had been made the instrument. 'Look around you,' he said to a sceptical fellow-countryman, 'ask who has built this church, with the houses and cloisters that surround it; who brought all these fields into cultivation; who constructed that magnificent road which conducted you from Viterbo; who has founded our two great fairs, and drawn here annually millions of visitors? And I will answer you; *that piece of tile* has done all this! May our copy do as much good as the original!'

It was before this *piece of tile* that he and his companions pronounced their vows, a circumstance which he always referred to with satisfaction, as calculated to remind the future

French province that the work of its restoration, like that of the first foundation of the Order, was solemnly consecrated to Mary.

The present appearance of the picture is altogether unchanged from that which it presented 300 years ago. It stands over the high altar of the church, where the visitor may also see the trunk of the oak to which it was formerly attached. Pilgrims flock to it in the nineteenth as in the fifteenth century, and some time back the devotion of the Roman people to this sanctuary caused the old church of San Niccolò, in the Piazza Farnese, in Rome, to be restored and rededicated to the Madonna della Quercia, a copy of the original picture being deposited there, fastened upon a silver oak-branch.

4.—*Our Lady of Mercy, Rimini.*

It has happened more than once during the reign of our present Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., that miraculous appearances have been reported with reference to pictures of our Blessed Lady in different parts of his dominions. In the year 1850, it was said of a painting of the Mother of Mercy in the church of St. Clare at Rimini, that the figure of Mary had been seen to open and close its eyes repeatedly during a period of several months; and again, since that time, a similar statement was made about a picture in the little church of Vico Varo. There are probably few of our readers who are not more or less struck at first sight by the apparent strangeness of such stories. That a person who had been deaf and dumb from his birth should suddenly receive the powers of hearing and of speech, or that one who had been born blind should suddenly receive his sight, in the presence of some painting or statue of the Madonna, is of course miraculous, but it is not, in the sense in which we have here used the word *strange*; on the contrary, it is a fact of very frequent occurrence in the history of these sanctuaries, and is sometimes acknowledged even by Protestants themselves, who conceive that they find a sufficient explanation of it in the earnest faith

of the persons relieved. Such facts may be improbable, but they are not self-evidently absurd; neither is there anything grotesque about them, anything that looks ridiculous, which there certainly is to a Protestant mind, and indeed (we need not hesitate to say) to human reason unenlightened by faith, in the assertion that a fresco upon a wall, or a painting on canvas, or a statue of wood or of stone, spoke or moved, or performed any other function of a living agent. We cannot wonder then that English journalists should have greeted the tales to which we have referred, with the utmost ridicule and scorn; they treated them much in the same way as we might treat a man who should pretend to have received a revelation from Heaven assuring him that the Christian religion was false and the worship of Jupiter true. The Catholic, on the other hand, when first he hears of such stories, is struck by their apparent strangeness, and thinks them, perhaps, extremely improbable; still, he knows that they are not absolutely impossible; and since they are in no way opposed to the articles of his faith, but rather confirmatory of some of them, he does not refuse to listen to the evidence that may be put before him. He may be a man of a very hard, severe, and critical turn of mind; yet, even so, he will only require that the evidence shall be unusually clear, positive and unquestionable, because the fact which it is intended to prove is unusual also; he will not be satisfied with the testimony of a few witnesses, perhaps not even of a dozen; he will sift and re-sift, question and cross-question, to see whether it might not be some deceit, some fancy of an over-heated imagination, or some extraordinary optical illusion; but in the end, if he should find that there is no room for any of these conjectures, if the evidence should prove to be altogether beyond exception, he will not dream of withholding his assent, and in proportion to his previous incredulity will be the firmness of his matured convictions.

But is there, then, for any of these extraordinary stories evidence of such a character? evidence really conclusive, and which could not fail to satisfy an impartial jury, even though the witnesses were subjected to the severest cross-examination

at the hands of some clever and obstinate *devil's advocate*? * We do not hesitate to answer this question in the affirmative; we assert that there is sufficient evidence positively to *command* the assent of any moderately candid person, even of one possessed by prejudices to the contrary, provided only that he does not refuse to listen to it, and that he consents to submit to those laws by which human testimony is ordinarily tried. In order to establish the truth of this assertion, we propose to examine—not the alleged miracle at Rimini, nor that of Vico Varo—but a large number of miracles of precisely the same character which happened simultaneously in the city of Rome towards the end of the last century, a time which, for all practical purposes, in an enquiry of this kind, may be considered as identical with our own. We make this choice, not the least from any doubt as to the truth of what was stated about the more modern instances, but simply because we have never had an opportunity of examining the processes by which the evidence for them was collected and sifted, whereas, as we shall presently show, we have all that the most captious critic could desire with reference to those others of which we propose to speak.

It was in the morning of the 9th of July, 1796, that a movement of the eyes was first noticed in a picture of the Mother of Mercy, painted in oil, that hung over an arch in one of the streets near the Piazza Santi Apostoli. It was a well-known picture, one of the many in Rome before which might often be seen some humble client of Mary telling his beads, and making his silent petitions. In the course of the same day the same supernatural appearance was observed in six other pictures, either in the streets or in churches, in different parts of the city; in three others it was first noticed on the 11th instant, in two more on the 12th, in another on the 13th, in three others on the 15th, and so on, until the number in Rome alone exceeded sixty, not to mention others in Frascati, Todi, Frosinone, Ceprano, and elsewhere. In

* The popular name for an ecclesiastical officer whose office it is to raise objections and difficulties in the process of the Canonization of Saints. His real title is *Promotor Fidei*.

these latter places the Bishops instituted a legal examination of the facts immediately, sometimes on the very day on which they happened, or at latest within a few days afterwards. In Rome, however, although witnesses were at once examined, and depositions taken by the parish priests of the several parishes in which the miracles were witnessed, yet the subject was not officially brought before the higher tribunal, the Cardinal-Vicar, until the 1st of October. A sufficient reason for this delay, over and above the proverbially slow pace at which ecclesiastical matters in Rome are uniformly made to travel, may be found in the peculiar circumstances of the present case. The same phenomena repeated over and over again almost indefinitely, caused it to be no easy task to know where to make a beginning; where there were upwards of fifty thousand witnesses, it required no mean powers of discretion and no trifling labour to select the most important and convincing. However, at length the work was begun; Cardinal della Soma-
glia named a very clever ecclesiastic and lawyer as his deputy, appointed an able notary to assist him in taking down the evidence, and desired them to proceed with all care and diligence to a legal examination of the whole matter. The investigation was continued, with many unavoidable interruptions, until the end of February 1797, the miracle being all this while still continued in many pictures; and even then the inquiries were suspended only because of the public impatience to have some authoritative account and confirmation of what was in everybody's mouth, and because enough had been already ascertained to make further investigation only an unnecessary labour.

The commission of enquiry sat on sixty days, and the examination of very many of the witnesses lasted so long (from three to four hours and upwards), that in forty-one sittings they only examined forty-one persons, in fifteen other sittings thirty persons, and in five others fifteen, making a total of eighty-six witnesses in all, selected out of 501, whose depositions upon oath as to the very same facts had been previously taken before the inferior local tribunals. The depositions of these eighty-six concerned twenty-six images or paintings; and besides the 415 other witnesses whose evidence had been given

with reference to these same images, there were 460 others who swore to the same facts with reference to forty other images; so that we have a sum-total of very nearly a thousand witnesses (961) who actually deposed under the solemn obligation of an oath to those extraordinary phenomena which Protestants fancy themselves at liberty to reject and ridicule simply on a *a priori* grounds of inherent improbability. But is it so, then, that the oaths of a thousand Christians are really of so little weight? If so, what is the value of history, which is written without the obligation of an oath at all? and what is the value of decisions in a court of justice, which have seldom so much as a fiftieth or even a hundredth part of this amount of evidence to rest upon?

But it will be said, perhaps, that the examination to which these witnesses were subjected was slight and unsatisfactory, not so strict and searching as that by which they would have been tried in a court of justice. We shall best dispose of this objection, and at the same time most conveniently bring to the knowledge of our readers all the main facts of these most interesting and important miracles, by giving *in extenso* every question that was proposed, together with a general abstract of the replies that were made, introducing as we go along a few brief remarks by way of illustrating the evidence which will be thus laid before us.

First, each witness knelt down, and took an oath upon the Holy Gospels to tell nothing but the simple truth, and was solemnly admonished by the judge of the scrupulous exactness to which he had thus bound himself not to depose to anything about which he had any the slightest doubt.

1. After this preliminary, they were questioned as to their name, profession, age, country, and such-like personal matters. These, of course, varied in every case; it will be enough to state generally that among the number of persons examined were men and women, laymen and ecclesiastics, young and old, nobles and plebeians, Italians and foreigners; or, looking into the list more closely, we may say that there were representatives of almost every rank in the hierarchy, from the Cardinalate downwards; of every rank of society, from princes to servants; of every variety of trade and profession

—lawyers, physicians, surgeons, professors, officers in the army, artists, mechanics, and shopkeepers; and lastly, of well-nigh every country in Europe—France, Spain, Italy, England, and Germany—not to mention a few individuals from Syria, Brazil, and other more distant parts.

2. The witnesses were next asked whether they knew for what purpose they were summoned before this tribunal, and whether they had been instructed by anybody as to what evidence they were to give; the first of which interrogatories was of course uniformly answered in the affirmative, the second in the negative; all declared that they were induced to give the testimony they were about to give from no temporal or human motive, but only for the glory of God, the honour of the Blessed Virgin, and the love of truth.

3. Do you know whether anything wonderful has lately happened in any sacred pictures or images in the city of Rome? and do you know this of your own certain knowledge, or only by hearsay from others?

Not only I, but all Rome knows well that most wonderful prodigies have happened during the last few months in very many sacred pictures and images throughout the city. I have witnessed those prodigies myself in one, two, five, ten, or whatever number of instances it might chance to have been; the rest I only know of by general report.

4. Speak only of those pictures or images in which you have witnessed the prodigy yourself: and describe exactly the figure or figures which they represent, where they are situated, what is their size and shape, of what materials they are made; if painted, whether on canvas, or on a wooden tablet, or on a wall; whether in oils, water-colours, or in fresco; if in *rilievo*, in what act, or with what peculiar expression or meaning, is the figure represented? More particularly describe with accuracy in what manner the eyes are shown, whether open, closed, or half-closed; whether fixed on any definite object, whether cast down or looking upwards, or whether directed generally towards the spectators wherever they might happen to be standing.

As to the figures represented by the pictures or images in which the prodigy was observed, I do not know that there

were any, excepting either our Lord dying or dead upon the cross, or our Blessed Lady with or without her divine Son, or the saine being taught by St. Anne. As to their situation, some were at the corners of the streets, or over doors or arches in public places; some were in churches or chapels; some in private oratories, or even in shops—it being the custom of the Roman tradesmen, as all who have visited that city must very well remember, to suspend a sacred picture with a lamp before it in some conspicuous part of their usual place of business. There was, of course, every variety of size and shape; so also of material, and of the position of the eyes. Sometimes the face was represented in profile, so that only one eye was visible; or if not in mere profile, yet one eye could be much more easily distinguished than the other: one was in full light, the other in more or less shade; sometimes the full front face was exhibited, and both eyes could be seen alike. Sometimes the eyes were half closed, as though in silent meditation and prayer, or modestly bent towards the ground, as of the *Virgo fidelis* or *Mater purissima*; sometimes they were tearful, and seeking consolation from Heaven, as of the *Mater dolorosa*; sometimes contemplating the Divine Infant, as the *Mater Christi*; sometimes looking out upon the people, and as it were encouraging them to draw near and ask for help, as of the *Mater misericordiæ* or *Mater amabilis*;—in a word, there was every conceivable variety both of form and expression, according to the attribute intended to be represented, and according to the ability or caprice of the artist.

5. When, where, and how did you see the prodigy? Were you the first to see it, or from whom did you hear of it? At what distance did you examine it? Were you in front of the picture, or on one side? Did you see it by day or by night? Was there much light or little? The light of the sun? or of lamps and candles? or of both together? Is your sight perfect or defective? Did you examine it with your naked eye, or had you spectacles? or did you use any kind of telescope, or other artificial glass? Was the picture itself framed and covered with glass, or was it without glass?

These questions are obviously among the most important in the series; and we must therefore enter somewhat more minutely into an examination of the answers to them. Of course, some of the witnesses examined were the first who had observed the prodigy in that particular picture or image concerning which they gave their evidence, whereas others had come to look at the invitation of a friend, or in consequence of the general report.

A priest was saying office, on Monday July 11, in a private chapel belonging to the church of the *Natività di nostro Signore* (or *degli Agonizzanti*, as it is more commonly called), and was kneeling opposite an altar where there was a valuable picture of the Madonna and Child. He had heard of the six or seven pictures in which a miraculous movement of the eyes had been observed on Saturday, and in which it was still continuing, and he was extremely anxious to witness the extraordinary phenomenon himself; he had gone for this purpose, more than once, to visit some of those pictures, but in consequence of the immense crowd he had been unable to get near enough to see anything; and he was not without a secret hope that God would perhaps vouchsafe to grant him the desire of his heart in this picture, which hung in a chapel attached to his own church. He looked in vain, however; and he was thinking, with some humiliation, that doubtless his own sins and unworthiness were the cause of his disappointment, when his eyes fell casually upon another much older and less valued painting of the Madonna, hanging at the side of the chapel, over some stalls or benches of the confraternity who used to assemble there; and he saw, or fancied that he saw, the eyes of this painting distinctly moving.

Should any reader be here disposed to object that men easily believe what they anxiously desire, we would answer in the words of a Protestant author, writing in defence of Christianity, that the very contrary of this seems to be nearer to the truth. 'Anxiety of desire, earnestness of expectation, the vastness (or strangeness) of an event, rather causes men to disbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to distrust, and to examine. When our Lord's resurrection was first reported to the Apostles, they did not believe, we are told, for joy. This was natural, and is

agreeable to experience.* And so it was in the instance before us. The painting was of a half-figure, rather more than three feet square; it hung only nine or ten feet from the ground, in a chapel thoroughly lighted by two windows having a southern aspect and opening on the public piazza, and the hour was ten o'clock in the morning of a bright summer day; nevertheless, the priest feared to trust the evidence of his own senses; he would not go and tell others, until he had first turned his eyes away to some other object, and then brought them back again to a fresh examination of the picture. Again he saw the left eye (which was in full light, the right being in deep shadow) slowly moving upwards, until the ball had entirely disappeared, or a single line only remained visible, and then as slowly return to its ordinary position. Still he hesitated; he began to recite the litany and other prayers in honour of Our Lady, the movement still continuing; then at last he called some of the clerics attached to the church, and they too declared that they saw the same extraordinary phenomenon. Members of the confraternity, and others living in the neighbourhood, were soon drawn to the church, and all acknowledged the miracle. The Superior of the church, a priest of mature age, just fifty, caused some steps to be brought, that the dust might be wiped off the picture, for it was very old, and had no glass before it; indeed, it had long been retained rather as some sort of ornament to the bare walls than as an object of devotion. This priest mounted the steps himself, and so did others after him, and examined the picture most closely, with the help of a lighted candle, and all remained perfectly satisfied of the reality of the movement. Before noon it was necessary to call in the soldiers of the piazza, or, as we should call them, the police, to keep order in the going out and coming in of the crowds of persons who wished to see it; and the ecclesiastical authorities directed it to be carried into the adjoining church. This was immediately done; it was removed from the heavy cornice that had surrounded it, and the mere piece of canvas, with the frame on which it was stretched, was carried into the church, and benediction given with it to the assembled multitudes. Both whilst it was being transferred from the one

* Paley's 'Evidences,' part i. prop. 2, c. 1, § vi.

place to the other, and whilst benediction was being given with it, the motion of both the eyes was distinctly seen; and it had not ceased when the witnesses gave the evidence from which we have been quoting in October, nor even when another witness was being examined in the month of December.

The next specimen of the evidence which we shall give shall be one in which the witness was not the first to observe the miracle, but only came in consequence of the reports of others. Signor Domenico Ambrosini, a layman, aged thirty-seven, and master of one of the choirs in Rome, was passing near the Piazza Santi Apostoli about eight o'clock in the morning of Saturday, the 9th of July, when he heard some one telling another that the picture of our Blessed Lady dell' Archetto (the picture that has been already spoken of as that in which first of all the miracle was seen in Rome) was opening and closing its eyes. Being in the immediate vicinity, curiosity induced him to step out of his way to look at it; he found only seven or eight persons as yet assembled, amongst whom he recognised one of the religious of a neighbouring convent, and a silversmith with whom he was acquainted. The spectators being few in number, they had every opportunity of looking at it quite closely and at their leisure; and after waiting two or three minutes they saw both the eyes of the Madonna gradually close. This witness, just like the former, at first misdoubted his own eyes; he tells us that he rubbed them, closed them, and then again looked steadily at the picture; but its eyes were still closed, and then, almost immediately, the upper eyelids returned to their places. 'I was so overcome at the sight that I could not contain myself, but burst forth into tears and some exclamation; the exact words I cannot now remember, but I know that at the very same instant those about me burst forth into similar exclamations, so that I was satisfied that they too had witnessed the same prodigy as myself.'

After he had recovered he considered the effect of the one single lamp that was burning there, but it hung so low that no reflection of its rays could reach the face of the figure; he considered also the rays of the sun, but the little *vicolo* was so narrow that these had not yet penetrated so far; in fine, he

considered every cause that could have had any influence on the appearance of the picture ; but the more he considered, the more he was convinced of the reality of what he had seen, and of its supernatural character. He soon went away in consequence of the increasing crowd ; and in the course of a few hours it was necessary to station the police at different points of the adjacent streets to regulate the movements of the people. Numerous offerings of lamps and candles were brought and lighted before the picture, yet the appearance was in no way dispelled by this increase of light, but rather made the more evident ; sometimes the eyebrows became more arched, the upper eyelids were raised, and the eyes were seen to move to and fro as if looking upon the assembly before them ; sometimes the eyes were almost or quite closed, and sometimes the ball of the eye disappeared, or very nearly so, under the upper eyelid.

It was this last phenomenon which was actually tested by a physical examination in the following manner. A Piedmontese priest, aged forty-six, who had been a missionary in Greece and Egypt, and had returned about two years before to a convent of his order in Rome, first heard of the miracle from one of the lay brothers in his house on Saturday morning, soon after it had been first observed. He did not believe it ; he thought it was probably a mistake into which the devout enthusiasm of the people had betrayed them in consequence of what they had lately heard from Arezzo, Ancona, and Torricella, where similar manifestations had taken place at earlier periods of the same year, and after judicial examination were admitted and approved by the ecclesiastical authorities. In vain the lay brother urged the number and respectability of the persons who had seen it ; his superior obstinately adhered to his own idea. At last curiosity induced him to go and see ; by the way he met some of his brethren, the parish priest, the curate, and others ; all repeated the same story, and that they had seen it for themselves ; still our friend would not be persuaded. He went on, however, and by and by had so far penetrated through the crowd that he found himself within six or seven feet of the picture ; having knelt down and said a few prayers, he rose and took up his position somewhat to

the left, but in a place where he could command a most distinct view of the face of the Madonna. Here he remained for upwards of an hour without once being able to detect any motion whatever in the eyes, although the prayers of the people were often interrupted by shouts of '*Evviva Maria!* now the eyes are moving,' &c. All this confirmed him more and more in his belief that the whole thing was a delusion of an overheated imagination; and he determined, with that firmness which was so marked a feature of his character, to remain there for three or four hours longer, that he might be able, as he says, 'most authoritatively to contradict the popular report.' Presently, however, whilst he was standing in this way with his eyes fixed on those of Our Blessed Lady, he saw their balls gradually rising and disappearing under the upper eyelids until only the white remained, and then as gradually returning to their former position, and this perpendicular motion repeated three or four times consecutively. Now at length he was constrained to acknowledge the facts, and he burst into a flood of tears, whilst at the very same instant the people cried out, as they had done before at times when he had seen nothing, '*Evviva Maria! ecco il miracolo, miracolo!*' But though the theory of an optical illusion and the mere dream of an overheated imagination was thus effectually destroyed, yet this witness did not instantly acknowledge that what he had seen was miraculous; the idea of trick and imposture next suggested itself to his mind, and he determined to put this also to the test before he fully abandoned his doubts. For this purpose he advanced still closer to the wall, laid hold of the ladder which stood there for those who wished to add more candles, or flowers, or any other ornament to the picture, and got up to a level with the face of the Madonna, and quite close to it. He pretended to be arranging a candle that had fallen out of the perpendicular and was melting its wax over the others, but in fact he examined most minutely the surface of the picture, more especially about the eyes. Having thoroughly satisfied himself that they were in every way the same as in an ordinary painting, and that there was no possibility of a fraud, he descended and went away, praising and glorifying God and our Blessed Lady, and declaring his readiness

even to lay down his life in attestation of the authenticity of a miracle which but two hours before he had laughed at as an idle tale. He did not return again any more on that day, but on Monday he determined to try the daring experiment to which we have alluded, and which still remains to be told. He went there about six o'clock in the evening (the reader must not forget that we are speaking of the middle of an Italian summer); and as by this time the miracle had been multiplied in many other pictures in other parts of the city, the crowd was not so great; still there were a good many people present. He took what he considered to be the best place for observing the picture, and, kneeling down, recited the litanies and other prayers for about a quarter of an hour, with his eyes steadfastly fixed on Our Lady. During this time he saw no sign of motion in the eyes, nor did any one else, for the silence of their prayers was not broken by a single exclamation. At last, however, he clearly distinguished the same movement in them that he had before seen on the Saturday, and at the very same moment the people saw it too, and shouted in their usual manner. Immediately he sprang up from his knees and began to ascend the steps, which he had previously placed in the proper position for his purpose, turned round to the people to explain to them that he had no evil intentions, but was only going to make the reality of the miracle still more unquestionable, and then proceeded to measure the eyes with a pair of compasses, which he had all this time held ready in his hands. Whilst he was mounting these few steps (the picture being about nine feet from the ground), and making the necessary explanation of his conduct to the people, the eyes of the picture had returned to their usual position; but they immediately moved upwards again, and when the ball had almost disappeared under the upper lid, he applied the two points of the compass, one to the lower eyelid, the other to the mere outer rim of the ball, which could just be seen, and then removed them: the distance was about five mathematical lines, he says; the eye then returned again to its place, until the ball actually touched the lower lid, and there was not even a thread of white visible below it.

We doubt whether we could have made this experiment

ourselves. We might have been glad to avail ourselves of a ladder or any other means for getting as close a view as possible of the miraculous movement, as, in fact, a very considerable number of persons did, not only at this picture, but at many others also; but when the motion of the eyes began, we should have been much more likely to experience the feelings which most of those persons acknowledged that they experienced, of sudden faintness and a difficulty to keep our footing, than able to touch the picture, and measure it with a pair of compasses. However, the experiment having been made, we are thankful that it has also been recorded, and recorded upon oath by the man himself who made it.

Nor must we omit to mention another experiment of the same kind which was made elsewhere. Seven persons (three ecclesiastics and four laymen) obtained permission to spend the night between the 9th and 10th December, 1850, in the church before the Madonna at Rimini. By means of two needles fastened between the canvas of the picture and its frame, they stretched a thread horizontally across the painting, below the eyes of the Blessed Virgin. The line of this thread left no vacant space below the pupils, whilst they were at rest; and the two spaces on either side became as it were two rudely-shaped triangles. Thus, it so accurately defined the relations of the several parts of the eye to one another, that the least movement could not fail to be readily and certainly detected. All these witnesses deposed upon oath, that whilst they were reciting together the prayers of a *Novena*, consisting chiefly of a paraphrase of the *Salve Regina*, as they uttered the words *Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte* (Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us), they saw a quick and repeated movement of the eyes, which caused them instantly to stop their prayers and to go up nearer to the altar. Some of them knelt on the altar itself; and one and all of them saw, amongst other movements, the pupils rise so far as almost to disappear under the upper eyelid, and again return to their original position.

The following observations, taken from an author who has been already quoted, may help our readers to form a just appreciation of the importance of these facts. 'It is not neces-

sary,' says Dr. Paley, 'to admit as a miracle what can be resolved into a false perception . . . The cases, however, in which the possibility of this delusion exists are divided from the cases in which it does not exist by many, and those not obscure, marks. They are for the most part cases of visions or voices; the object is hardly ever touched, the vision submits not to be handled, *one sense does not confirm another*. They are likewise almost always cases of a solitary witness. It is in the highest degree improbable, *and I know not, indeed, whether it hath ever been the fact*, that the same derangement of the mental (or visual) organs should seize different persons at the same time—a derangement, I mean, so much the same as to represent to their imagination the same objects.' * Apply these remarks to the history we are examining, and how strikingly they confirm and illustrate its truth. The motion of the eyes in these material representations of our Blessed Lady were witnessed, not by one person but by many, by several hundreds and even thousands, by a whole city; they saw it not only separately, but together; not only by the light of lamps and of candles, but by the broad light of day; not only at a distance, but near; not once only, but several times; they not only saw it, but even, as we may most truly say, touched and handled it.

Besides the instance that has been already given, there was a picture of the Crucifixion, about four feet square, which was removed from the wall where it usually hung and where the movement of its eyes was first noticed, and placed in the middle of the room leaning against a table, and resting on a stool or low bench not eighteen inches from the ground. It was in a private oratory, but hundreds and hundreds of persons came and saw it. All those who from age or infirmity were unable to make their way through a crowd, or whose sight was somewhat defective, or who were distrustful of their senses amid the glare of lights and the excitement of a large congregation, or who from any other cause were not sufficiently satisfied with what they had seen in public to be ready to take an oath upon it—all came to see this picture of the Crucifixion. They arranged the lights as they pleased, took

* Evidences, vol. i. p. 333, ed. 1811.

the picture in their hands (it had neither glass nor frame), brought it to the window, turned it round and round, placed it wherever they thought proper; and all were thoroughly convinced of the supernatural character of the phenomena. One person deposed that he had been eye-witness of the miracle in this picture hundreds of times; another, Don Stefano Felici, Rector of the English College, who had seen the miracle in other pictures, yet would not give his evidence upon oath until he had witnessed this, deposed that after the most minute examination of the painting itself he had seen the eyes swell and become full, and move to and fro, and up and down, as though they were living eyes; so did Signor Giuseppe Valadier, an architect, and very many others.

We will only add, that of the pictures in churches and other public places, most, if not all, either never had any glass before them at all, or else the glass was removed as soon as the prodigy was observed—as was done at Rimini also on the second day of the appearances; that some of the witnesses deposed to having used telescopes; others said that they had confined their scrutiny to one eye only, fearing to weaken the intensity of their attention by looking at both; and, in a word, that every conceivable precaution which the most jealous suspicion, and sometimes even the most resolute incredulity, could dictate, was actually taken by some or other of the numerous witnesses that were examined.

6. The sixth question which was put was this: Was the movement of both eyes simultaneous, and according to the ordinary movement of the human eye; or was it extraordinary, and of one eye only? Did other persons see it at the same time with yourself? Was the movement slow and perceptible, or sudden and instantaneous? Did it seem to disfigure the countenance, or otherwise?

If this last item of enquiry should strike any one as unmeaning or irrelevant, we wish that he would try to realise to himself what would be the ordinary effect upon his own mind of seeing a sign of life in this one feature, the eye, of some inanimate figure, say a corpse, a statue, or a painting. Our own impression is, that it would be something very frightful: we fancy that the incongruity between a living and a dead

part of one and the same thing, life and motion in one place and the still rigidity of death in another, would strike us as a deformity and very offensive. Yet the uniform testimony of all the witnesses, excepting one only, who happened to have himself painted about thirteen years before the picture with reference to which he gave his evidence, was directly contrary; one and all declared that even when the movements of the eyes were most unnatural, when the pupils were entirely hid under the upper eyelid, or when one eye moved and the other was motionless, still even then the aspect of the whole countenance was such as inspired them with the deepest respect, awe, and veneration; it seemed to be the countenance of one making a solemn appeal to their consciences; it spoke to their hearts, and moved them to tears; never, excepting in that one only instance which we have named—it never struck them as unsightly and repulsive. Some, indeed, gave distinct evidence that a change of colour and expression was manifested in the whole face; others said their attention had been so fixed upon the eyes that they had not accurately observed any other part; but all agreed in describing the general effect as that of a living, speaking countenance, such as they were satisfied no human art, even under the most favourable circumstances, could have succeeded in producing.

With regard to the degree of rapidity with which the eyes were moved, the story we have already told about the compasses will enable us to form some sort of idea; many witnesses answer this part of the enquiry by borrowing an illustration from the minute-hand of a watch, which, they said, though you may not be able to swear at any moment, ‘I see it moving,’ yet after an infinitely short space of time you can swear that it *has* moved. There seems, in truth, to have been the same variety in the degree of rapidity which was observed in different pictures as there was in the direction of the movement, sometimes perpendicular, sometimes horizontal, &c.; the same variety, in fact, that there naturally is in different eyes, or in the same eyes at different times.

7. Did you see this prodigy more than once? How often? Were you always equally positive about it, or did you sometimes doubt of its truth? At the times when you were quite

positive about it, were other persons present, and were they equally satisfied? Did they at the very same moment express their conviction in any way? and in what way? Give solid reasons to show that this conviction was not the result of any optical illusion, resulting from the reflection of the lights, the glittering or undulating surface of the glass or canvas, or any artifice practised upon the picture itself.

Some persons will probably be of opinion that enough has been said already to dissipate in all reasonable minds every suspicion either of error or of fraud; nevertheless, at the risk of wearying perhaps a portion of our readers, we will venture to add one or two corroboratory circumstances that have not yet been mentioned, but which will tend to show more and more plainly how far some at least of the witnesses were from being carried away by mere excitement and enthusiasm, and how little room there was for the practice of imposture.

In fact, as to mere excitement and enthusiasm, we do not believe (as we have already said) that they are ever likely on any large scale to produce the effects ascribed to them. We can conceive a not very strong-minded individual being momentarily carried away, so as to imagine that he saw what he did not see; but we cannot conceive, we think it simply impossible, that hundreds and thousands of persons should have been so deceived, and deceived repeatedly and permanently, as to be ready (as many of these witnesses professed themselves to be) to lay down their lives in defence of their opinion. We are confident that the very number of the witnesses, the frequent repetition of the miracle, and, in a word, every circumstance of this most remarkable history, would have served to put men on their guard against yielding too ready an assent, would have led them 'to disbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to distrust, and to examine.' We once heard of a girl in a convent-school who fancied that the image of the Madonna in their private oratory was shedding tears; and she went and told the sisters so. But did they believe it? was their first impulse to believe it, or was it not rather to think that the girl had been mistaken? They felt, as everybody must naturally feel prior to examination, that it was more likely that the girl should be deceived than that the miracle should be

true; they proceeded to make the examination, and were satisfied that they had judged correctly. But precisely this same antecedent improbability must have been felt by hundreds of persons in Rome when first they heard a similar announcement, and is felt by us also when we read of it; only it was surmounted in them by the evidence of their own senses, and in us it is surmounted by the strength and complication of *their* testimony.

These remarks might be illustrated by many curious and interesting examples, but want of space compels us to be brief. In the case of the Madonna in the church *degli Agonizzanti*, or rather in the chapel attached to that church, when a report was circulated that the miracle was being wrought there, those who first came to see it naturally turned their eyes to the larger and better painting which hung over the altar; they looked for the miracle there, yet not one was found to imagine for a moment that he really saw it: when the priest returned, and directed their attention to the older and less noticed painting suspended above the stalls at the side, all saw it and were satisfied. Again, it sometimes happened that whilst the people were assembled in prayer before one of these pictures, some solitary individual, or some two or three perhaps kneeling together, would cry out that the miracle was happening when it really was not, and here and there a few simple pious souls scattered through the crowd might be betrayed by over-eagerness and haste into giving a response to the cry; but there it ended: whereas, at other times, when the miracle really did happen, there would be one simultaneous shout bursting forth from the whole congregation, so that those who heard it could only compare it to a clap of thunder or the discharge of artillery. Very often, too, this shout consisted not merely of vague general expressions, such as 'Look, look! now the eyes are moving; Jesus, Mary,' &c., but it accurately defined the precise nature of the change that was taking place; e. g. 'Look how she is raising her eyes to heaven! or how she is closing them, or turning them to those on the right, or on the left;' and the unanimity of the shout attested its correctness. Yet once more, had the phenomena in question been the mere false perception of a heated fancy, we

should naturally have looked for them most in those pictures or images to which there was the greatest popular devotion ; had they been manifested only in pictures or images that had fallen into neglect, we should have heard a plausible tale from the author of some new 'Pilgrimage to Rome,' that they were well-managed miracles, got up for the sake of recovering for those sanctuaries some portion of their lost popularity. But they first began in a picture which was neither forgotten nor extravagantly frequented ; they were repeated in so many, that none was thereby brought forward into singular notice, so as to become the special favourite of the people ; and lastly, in some to which there had always been great devotion, and to which this devotion still continues, they were never exhibited at all.

Then as to the theory of all these appearances having been the result of fraud and imposture, this is, if possible, still more inconceivable, more inconsistent with reason and with the facts of the case than the former supposition, which denied their reality altogether. In fact, contemporary writers tell us that nobody ever pretended that imposition was in this case possible. A whole city imposed upon by some clever contrivance, not exhibited once for all and in a single picture, in some obscure isolated corner, where none could come near to examine, but repeated day after day, and night after night, during a period of several months, in seventy or eighty pictures at once, and in the most conspicuous situations ; in pictures that could be taken down, and handled, and subjected to the most minute examination, and which actually were so treated ;—what human head could devise, what human hand direct, such a machinery of fraud as this, so patent in its effects, yet itself so imperceptible, so multiplied, yet everywhere undetected ? Surely everybody must acknowledge that such an imposition as this—if it be an imposition at all—far exceeds the powers of man ; that if it was not a miracle wrought by God, it can only have been a lying wonder wrought by the devil : and if any should hesitate as to which of these alternatives he must accept, what follows may perhaps be of some service in guiding him to a right decision.

8. The next question proposed to all the witnesses in this

judicial examination was this: What feelings and affections did the sight of this prodigy excite in your mind, and what do you gather to have been the impression produced upon others? What is your reason for thinking so?

Besides what has been already said on this subject, it may here be added, that on the day after the miracles began, the afternoon of Sunday the 10th of July, the Pope ordered public missions to be preached in six of the principal *piazze* of Rome, that they continued for sixteen days, until the 26th instant, and that they were so numerously and devoutly attended that not even the spiritual exercises given before the Jubilee were at all to be compared to them. The fruits of penance which they produced are described as something quite incredible. It is said that persons who had left Rome for a few days, and then returned to it, would have found nothing but the material buildings unaltered; in all the details of life, conversation and manners, nobody could recognise Rome's former self; Jesus and Mary were on every lip and in every heart, tears of penitence and love were bedewing every cheek, and nothing was thought or spoken of but the important concerns of eternity.

And here, perhaps, is the most fitting opportunity to say a few words upon a question which is sure, sooner or later, to suggest itself to the minds of our readers—viz. the purpose of God in all these extraordinary miracles which we have been considering. We know, indeed, that his judgments are incomprehensible and his ways unsearchable; 'Who among men is he that can know the counsel of God, or who can think what the will of God is?'* At the same time, 'the mercies of the Lord and his wonderful works to the children of men' are to 'give Him glory;'† and without presuming to search into what is hidden from us, we may attentively examine (and should be wanting, perhaps, in our duty if we did *not* examine) all the circumstances of these miracles, so as to see how far it is possible from this consideration to ascertain the beneficent purpose for which they were wrought. In the present case, a hasty glance at the political history of the period seems sufficient to furnish us with a clue (if one may say so) to the

* Wisdom ix. 13.

† Psalm cvi. 8.

Divine intentions. It was in this very year, 1796, that the French army, with Buonaparte as its commander-in-chief, overran the north of Italy; and on the 4th of February, 1797, they took possession of Ancona. We need not follow the army through all the stages of its progress until it occupied the Eternal City itself, and the Supreme Pontiff was a prisoner in their hands, because our readers will be already familiar with the main outlines of the history, and will at once have recognised from this brief allusion to it the merciful purpose which miracles wrought at such a moment may have been intended to serve. A similar miracle which is recorded of a painting in Brescia in 1524* was in like manner contemporary with terrible wars and rumours of wars throughout the whole of Italy, that did not cease until after the sacking of Rome by the Constable Bourbon in 1527. The miracle in the painting of Santa Maria presso S. Celso at Milan happened in the midst of a time of pestilence, which, as readers of history too well know, is always a time of a great increase of sin and wickedness in some, as of goodness in others. There are many other instances also besides that of Rimini, which need not however be enumerated; for surely these are sufficient to justify us in drawing a probable conclusion, that in miracles of this kind it may have been the merciful purpose of God to strengthen and encourage the faith and hope of Christians at a moment when they were about to be subjected to a very severe trial.

Our Lord bade his disciples, when they should hear of wars and seditions, not to be terrified, but lift up their heads, because their redemption was at hand; nevertheless He has also told us, among the signs of 'the end,' that men's hearts shall fail and wither away for fear and for expectation of what shall come upon the whole world; and experience has shown that in times of great public calamity (which, after all, are only faint shadows, as it were, of 'the distress of nations' that shall be when the end comes) men's hearts often *do* fail, and the faith of brethren who are weak gives way to despair, and their love waxes cold and is extinguished. This is what happens naturally: Almighty God, therefore, as a most merciful and compassionate Father,

* Astolfi, '*Storia Univ. delle Imag. Mirac.*,' p. 540, ed. Venice, 1624.

does not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able; with extraordinary trials He also sends extraordinary assistance, that so we may be able to bear them. Who can doubt but that many a wavering heart was comforted, many a feeble spirit strengthened, during the terrible events of the close of the last century, by a recollection of those signs and wonders that had been so abundantly vouchsafed in the metropolis of the Christian world? In like manner, who shall know until the day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, in how many souls the spark of Christian faith and hope has been just now rekindled by the similar prodigies which it has pleased God to manifest in Rimini, Frosinone, and other towns of Italy?

9. We come now to the last question that was asked. Do you know, or have you heard, of anybody who was present at these prodigies, and saw them, yet does not account them miraculous? Who is he, and what are the grounds of his opinion?

This was uniformly answered in the negative. There were some who had never seen the prodigies at all, who had never succeeded in getting sufficiently near to any of the paintings to satisfy themselves that there was a real movement of the eyes; or who, if they succeeded in gaining an advantageous position, had not the patience to retain it very long; but these acknowledged that during the time they occupied this position neither did the people profess to see any movement; they continued their prayers without interruption. There are a few, a very few, exceptions to be made to this statement, of persons who believed themselves to be sufficiently near at a time when the people *did* profess to see the miracle, and yet did not themselves see it, just as happened at first to the priest who was so hard to be persuaded; but even these confessed that they were perfectly satisfied both of the reality of the phenomenon and of its supernatural character by the concurrent testimony of hundreds of others whom they could trust as competent witnesses.

If any of our readers should be disposed to trust the bodily senses of these individuals, but to mistrust their judgment; to think them foolish for being persuaded by others against,

or at least without, the evidence of their own senses, but to insist upon the fact that they were present on certain occasions when others professed to see the miracle, yet themselves did not see it, although (humanly speaking) they had the same opportunities of seeing as their neighbours had; if any, I say, should be tempted to lay great stress upon this negative argument, they should bear in mind a very obvious consideration, namely (to use the language of Sir Philip Sydney), that 'a wonder is no wonder in a wonderful subject;' we mean, that the whole history which we have been engaged in describing is not natural, but supernatural; and that as it pleased God to supersede or reverse the ordinary laws of nature in one part of it, so it may have pleased Him to reverse or supersede them also in another part. There is no inconsistency in supposing that God may have wrought a public miracle, yet for his own wise and inscrutable purposes vouchsafed a clear and intimate sight of it to some persons, while He withheld it from others, as in the Resurrection, for example; or, still more appositely, the conversion of Saul. Anyhow, whatever may be the true explanation of the circumstance that these few (for they were *very* few) did not see the miracle, it cannot by any fair and candid mind be considered as an equivalent set-off against the evidence of the hundreds of persons who *did* see it. Had the phenomenon in question been seen only once, and in a single picture, and fifty persons that were present had sworn that they saw it, and five others that they did not see it, would the evidence of these last have disproved the evidence of the first? How much less, then, when the witnesses on the one side so infinitely outnumber those on the other, without in any way differing from them either in age, rank, ability, judgment, or any other quality which would have entitled their testimony to a superior degree of consideration! Surely both justice and charity require that as we do not misdoubt the veracity of the one class, so neither should we misdoubt that of the other.

We have now fulfilled our engagement of giving a copy of the questions that were proposed, together with a general abstract of the replies that were made in the judicial examination of these most interesting miracles, which was instituted

in Rome by order of the Cardinal-Vicar, on the 1st of October, 1796; and we feel confident that our readers will at once recognise the justice of the sentence, which was formally pronounced on the 28th of February, 1797, after a most careful examination by his Eminence himself of the whole body of the evidence—viz. that their truth was most abundantly established (*satis superabundeque comprobata fuisse veritatem antedicti mirabilis prodigiosique eventûs*). It only remains to be mentioned that the Cardinal ordered a succinct account of the facts to be at once drawn up for publication; that he took the trouble of examining this also from beginning to end; and that he signed with his own hand every copy that was printed, that so everybody might be well assured of the authenticity of the narrative. It is from one of these copies that our statement has been abridged; and should it fall into the hands of any who are strangers to the Catholic Church, we would only ask them whether it has not been supported by such a body of evidence as they would themselves on any other subject admit to be irresistible; and if, as indeed they must, they should answer this question in the affirmative, yet should still refuse to believe the statement, because it is inconsistent with the doctrines of their religion, because it seems to sanction the due honour and veneration of images, which they refuse, and the *cultus* of the Blessed Virgin, whose intercession they will not acknowledge—we would go on to ask them another question, proposed more than twenty years ago, and not yet answered by many whom it most deeply concerns: ‘Which alternative shall the Protestant accept? Shall he retreat, or shall he advance? Shall he relapse into scepticism upon all subjects, or sacrifice his deep-rooted prejudices? Shall he give up his knowledge of times past altogether, or endure to gain a knowledge which he thinks he fully has already, the knowledge of Divine truth?’

Whilst this sheet is going through the press, I have been reminded that an account of the miraculous appearances we have described was published in England at the very time of their occurrence; and the life-like freshness which characterises all contemporary evidence induces me to add some of the most

striking passages from this account. The title of the book is 'Miraculous Events Established by Authentic Letters from Italy,' and it was printed in London by J. P. Coghlan, No. 37, Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, in the year 1796, i.e. some few months before the publication of the report by the Cardinal-Vicar, which we have been examining.

The compiler, or publisher, whoever he was, says that he has been induced to publish 'in consequence of the absurd misrepresentations so freely scattered in our papers on the subject in question;' and observes that 'it is not a solitary fact that has happened in the presence of a few, or of persons predisposed to believe it. It has past in many places, before many thousand spectators, and many of them the most likely of all men to doubt it, to deny it, and to ridicule it. The writers of the letters which relate it are known to be persons of honour, virtue, and integrity. They assert themselves to be eye-witnesses of the facts, and call on the universal testimony of the cities and towns where they reside to depose to the truth of their narrative.'

The first letter from which we will quote was written from Ancona on the 9th and 10th of July, 1796, and has reference to an instance of the miraculous movement of the eyes of an image of our Blessed Lady in that town, which has been only alluded to, not related, in the foregoing pages. The writer was Monseigneur Deschamps de la Magdelaine, formerly Vicar-General and Canon of Lyons. He says, 'the people of Ancona were fearing an invasion from the French; no preparations of defence had been made by Government; and the people, without any fixed system to guide them, were the dupes of the profligate and the needy, who had formed the project of a general massacre, which was to begin at midnight on Saturday between the 25th and 26th of June. A great number of sailors had entered into this conspiracy; and the better to secure their share of the plunder, which would undoubtedly have taken place on the occasion, they had some days before embarked their effects, and given orders to their wives to hold themselves in readiness to obey the signal for going aboard their boats, in order, as they pretended, to escape from the French.' . . . Some rumours of this plot having got abroad, there was 'general

alarm and expectation.' . . . 'This class of females (the wives of the sailors, &c.) were always particularly devout to a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin placed in the cathedral,' and they crowded thither in their present distress; they also ran to his Eminence (the Bishop of Ancona), to demand the opening of the coffin which contains the uncorrupted body of a holy bishop of this see in the fifteenth century, whose beatification we celebrated last May. Their petition is granted, and they run in crowds to the cathedral to invoke his protection, till it was time to sing the litanies, which is done every Saturday at the altar of the Blessed Virgin. As they continued to implore the intercession of Mary, a little child, who, contrary to custom, appeared to be very devout and recollected, cried out to his mother, 'The Holy Virgin moves her eyes.' The mother looks and beholds the prodigy. Others less liable to be deceived do the same. . . . In an instant the miraculous fact is spread over the whole town. It was received by some as a fable, others laughed heartily at the credulity of the spectators, while the coffee-houses rang with the pleasantry and the indecent mirth of the thoughtless and the idle. However, many undertook to clear up the mystery, and judge for themselves. On their return, they own their conviction of the truth of what they had heard, and now seen. The scoffer and the libertine now hold a different language, and are not ashamed publicly to ask pardon for the profane and ludicrous animadversions they had made on this miraculous fact. The streets are soon thronged. . . . The ringleaders of the conspiracy, astonished at the prodigy, throw themselves at the feet of their confessors, lay down their arms on the altars, and implore the forgiveness of those whom they had marked out as the first victims of their fury. The church door could not be shut, but remained open till yesterday evening, the thirteenth day. On the next day, Sunday, June 26, the public voice demanded that the image should be carried in solemn procession through the town. There was no time to give public notice; but in an instant ecclesiastical chapters, religious communities, corporations, confraternities, the nobility, the magistrates, composing a body of 1,000 persons, form the most orderly and the most edifying procession I have ever beheld. . . . Since this general

procession, which was performed barefooted, there have been many others. Illuminations ; . . . voluntary offerings, many presenting jewels, gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, watches, gold chains, &c., money, poniards, stilettos, and pistols.

Our Cardinal-Bishop very prudently ordered the church door to be shut for the first time yesterday at ten o'clock at night, after giving benediction, reading aloud the beads, and singing the litanies. He ordered the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed till next Sunday, &c. As to myself, from Saturday the 25th till the 28th at midnight, I believed the miracle, but only on the testimony of others. . . . Since that time I have seen the eyes of the Blessed Virgin, painted on the canvas, (1) move horizontally, as if they had been animated, (2) open wider than usual, of which I was able to judge from having often said Mass at that altar, and (3) shut quite close, so that the hair of the upper eyelid hung down over the under one. . . .

As measures are taking to give to the public an authentic statement of this miraculous fact, yesterday and the day before three painters were called in—men eminent in their profession, and of acknowledged probity. Myself know them to be so. The Vicar-General, attended by the episcopal notary and proper officers, desired them to take down the picture, and to examine it in every part. They took out the glass, put their hands on the face, and particularly on the eyes, to see if there was any hollow.

Nothing was found but the canvas perfectly sound in all its parts, without the least appearance or even possibility of deceit. . . . No sooner was the hand removed from the eyes than they opened widely. The painters stood petrified at the sight, and were so strongly affected that they could take no nourishment all that day. I have just seen one of the painters, Joseph Pallavicini, aged fifty-five years, who has not yet recovered from his astonishment, and who assured me that he felt the eyes move under his fingers, as if they belonged to a living body. . . . A celebrated artist in painting on wood was present, and was so impressed with awe and veneration, that taking from his finger a diamond ring, valued at 2,000 French livres, he placed it himself on the crown of the Blessed Virgin. He then hastens to the sacristy, and enters into a bond to con-

tribute 2,500 livres towards any decoration that might be judged proper for this picture. A Turk was curious to see the prodigy, and seeing it, he said in Italian, 'Woman, thou movest thine eyes,' and putting his hand to his scimeter, which was richly ornamented, said to his attendant, 'Give her this.'

From the letters written from Rome our extracts shall be shorter, as we have already given so complete an analysis of the evidence taken in that city before the Ecclesiastical Commission. They have a special interest of their own, as having been written by our own countrymen, who must have been known to the men of the past generation, and addressed too to persons whose names are familiar to us all. Thus one is addressed to the celebrated Dr. Milner, at that time stationed as the missionary priest at Winchester. His correspondent was a Mr. Stephen Green, a gentleman whom, as we learn from his own letter, Mr. Milner had converted from Protestantism, and who had lately received subdeacon's orders in the English College in Rome. Another of Mr. Green's letters is addressed to the Rev. Mr. Griffiths, in St. George's Fields. Another letter is from Dr. John Charles Bonomi, formerly Professor of Theology in the College of Propaganda, who writes to his brother, No. 76, Great Titchfield Street, London, on July 16, 1796. This gentleman's evidence is specially valuable, as he had written a critical work on the subject of miracles, and was therefore quite familiar with the accredited tests of their authenticity, &c. To quote these letters at length would be only to repeat what our readers are already acquainted with from other sources. A few extracts, however, may add some new details of interest (as, for instance, that some persons at this time suffered imprisonment in Rome for inventing reports of false miracles), or they give valuable confirmation of something that has been too briefly stated before. Thus Dr. Bonomi testifies not only to his own conviction of the reality of the miraculous appearances, but also of many others, 'neither women, nor clergymen, but people of the world, who at first for some days denied it,' but are now convinced. He adds that 'the prodigy has not been seen in any of those pictures that are the most respected, exclusive of that of the Madonna dell' Archetto, in which it was seen for the first

time on Saturday at ten o'clock. . . . It is incredible,' he continues, 'that the people, who were only taken up with thoughts of the French, should not have immediately concluded it to be a sign of their being to be liberated from them; but no: the effects were a sincere repentance, reconciliations of enemies, bad habits shaken off, immediate restitutions, without mentioning confessions and public signs of penance. The next day, at the request of the people, the missions began in public places. The crowd is incredible. . . . Those who edified the most were the most dissolute among workmen, butchers, carters, porters, &c. They were in earnest, and the first thing they did was to hang by those pictures their forbidden weapons, or they resigned them to their confessors. Artizans now say or sing hymns to our Blessed Lady at their work.'

The missions began in six different *piazze* or squares of the city on the 10th inst., and a gentleman writing on the same day as Dr. Bonomi, says, 'The streets are become as sacred as the cloisters. Many blind, dumb, and lame have been miraculously cured. We have no example of such a multiplicity of prodigies; their frequency is such that they have almost ceased to create any extraordinary sensation in the beholders. But admirable are the fruits which they produce. . . . At the general communion in Ancona 14,000 persons communicated. The assassin, the revolutionist, and the atheist all crowd to the confessional, and it is no uncommon thing to hear penitents making public confessions in the squares and in the churches.' 'We attend the service in the square nearest to our residence. It is large and always full: no church could contain such numbers; but such is the silent attention to the sermon that the preacher is distinctly heard from one extremity to the other. The sermon finished, an awful pause ensues, and, falling into groups, the people retire, singing aloud the beads and other prayers. The same scene takes place in the other squares, notwithstanding the excessive heats which now prevail. Yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow were the days appointed for penitential processions, in order to atone for former scandals. On each of these days two processions set out from two of the squares where the mission is held, each paying a visit to one of the principal churches of Rome. As these churches could

not contain the number [one letter says 40,000], a *repositor* is erected at the principal door, and when the whole procession is arrived, the Blessed Sacrament is placed on it. We yesterday beheld from our windows that which set out from the square which we attend. The Vicar-General who is charged with the government of the diocese of Rome was at the head of it, carrying the cross, and accompanied by several prelates. No one appeared in the sacred vestments, but the clergy and the religious men walked with those of every profession without distinction, and the women followed. At the head of these was the Princess Barberini, carrying a copy of the picture of our Blessed Lady at Ancona, where these prodigies first appeared. The throng was so great that it was impossible to form them into regular ranks. They marched in groups, forming a front of fifteen or twenty persons abreast, preceded by some ecclesiastics of the secular or regular clergy, who sung some spiritual canticles, and were answered by the rest. Some interval was left between the different groups. This confusion of ranks—princes, nobles, labourers, priests—all assuming the garb and attitude of sinners, had something in it extremely striking. There were more men than women. Many walked barefoot. All seemed perfectly recollected and penetrated with the deepest compunction. It was a full hour before all had passed our house. . . .

‘We joined in the rear, and went to the door of St. Mary Major’s to offer our prayers and receive benediction. Everything was conducted with the greatest order and decorum. The procession might now be said to be at an end, and the people at liberty to return to their respective homes. However their return resembled a fervent procession, the same prayers, the same music, and the same recollection.’

Lastly, I will only add that the letter to Mr. Milner states that the reality of the miracles is attested by professed atheists, and that seven Jews and an English Protestant gentleman have been converted by it.

5.—*The Holy House of Loreto.*

‘ON a hill-side on the east coast of Italy, at a distance of about three miles from the sea, and eighteen miles south of Ancona, stands the city of Loreto. On the summit of the hill, towering far above the surrounding buildings, rises the magnificent cathedral church, with its great dome and *campanile*. Unlike any other church, it seems to have something of the nature of a castle, owing to the fortifications with which it is provided, in order to repel the attacks of pirates who might seek to plunder the sanctuary which the church contains. From its great height and from its position, it may be seen and the music of its bells is often heard, at a considerable distance out at sea.

‘On entering the church there is seen, beneath the dome, a singular rectangular edifice, of no great height, constructed apparently of white marble, and richly adorned with statues and sculpture. On entering this building, the contrast between the poverty of the interior—at least so far as the walls are concerned—and the richness of the marble exterior is astonishing. The walls, as seen from the interior, are the plain rough walls of a cottage, and evidently of great antiquity.’* This is the famous Holy House of Loreto, concerning which the following words appear in the Roman Martyrology, and in the calendars prefixed to many Catholic books of devotion, under the date of the 10th of December, *In Piceno Translatio sacræ domûs Dei Genitricis Mariæ, in quâ Verbum Caro factum est*; and in the Missal and Breviary, a proper mass and office for the commemoration of the miraculous event which these words record.

‘Now the Church,’ says St. Augustin,† ‘makes an annual commemoration of those things which took place on certain days, and of which, by reason of their remarkable excellence,

* Loreto and Nazareth, by W. A. Hutchison, Priest of the Oratory.

† c. Faustum, lib. xxxii. c. 12.

she deems it useful and necessary that the recollection should be preserved by a festal celebration;’ and again, the same learned doctor says in another place,* ‘that we set apart and consecrate certain days to the commemoration of God’s benefits, in order that they may not, by the lapse of time, be lost sight of and forgotten.’ If then the Bishop of Hippo may be taken as a true exponent of the mind and motives of the Church in the institution of her festivals, the translation of the Holy House of Loreto is an act of the loving-kindness of God, of a very remarkable character, which it is both right and proper in itself, and also good for our souls’ health, that we should not forget.

‘The ridicule of one half the world, and the devotion of the other half, has made every one acquainted with the strange history of this translation, which is written in all the languages of Europe round the walls of the sanctuary;’ how the House in which our Blessed Lady was living in Nazareth when the angel Gabriel was sent to her from God, or rather the particular chamber of that House in which she then was, and in which the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished; in which also Jesus was brought up and was subject to his parents; from which He went forth to the Jordan to be baptized by John before He began his public ministry; that this house, or chamber, was miraculously transported by the hands of angels, first from Galilee to Dalmatia, and afterwards from Dalmatia to Italy, towards the end of the thirteenth century, where it has ever since remained, an object of the deepest veneration to all the faithful.

Such is the event of which the Church of God solemnly preserves the memory by an annual commemoration, and which we must therefore conclude that she considers to be a benefit which demands our gratitude, and which is worthy of being held in our everlasting remembrance. Let us consider the matter for a moment from this point of view before we proceed to examine it at all in the light of history.

The whole history of this famous sanctuary may be said to be contained in a summary, or as in a promise or prophecy, in those words which the Church annually repeats in her cele-

* De Civ. Dei, x. 3.

bration of the feast, 'I will glorify the house of my majesty and the place of my feet.'* For certainly never was there a house so glorified, its name so made to resound from one end of the world to the other, as this humble chamber. 'It is undoubtedly the most frequented sanctuary in Christendom,' says an impartial eye-witness.† 'The devotion of pilgrims even on ordinary week-days exceeds anything that can be witnessed at the holy places in Palestine, if we except the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Easter. Every morning while it is yet dark, the doors of the church are opened. A few lights round the sacred spot break the gloom, and disclose the kneeling Capuchins who have been there through the night. Two soldiers, sword in hand, take their place by the entrance of the House, to guard it from injury. One of the hundred priests who are in daily attendance commences at the high altar the first of the hundred and twenty masses that are daily repeated. The *Santa Casa* itself is then lighted, the pilgrims crowd in, and from that hour till sunset come and go in a perpetual stream. The "House" is crowded with kneeling or prostrate figures, the pavement round it is deeply worn with the passage of devotees, who, from the humblest peasant of the Abruzzi up to the King of Naples, crawl round it on their knees, while the nave is filled with bands of worshippers, who, having visited the sacred spot, are retiring from it backwards, as from some royal presence.'

And whence comes all this—what is its cause? Precisely that spoken of by the prophet, because this *Santa Casa* is believed to be 'the house of God's majesty and the place of his feet.' Mount Sinai has ever been accounted a sacred spot, because the Lord once came down upon it with fire and in the darkness of a cloud, and gave to Moses there the two tables of testimony, written with his own finger; but in the place of which we are now speaking, the Son of God 'came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;' 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' The temple of Solomon was wonderful and glorious and very holy, because of 'the glory of the

* In one of the Antiphons at Vespers. See Isaias lx. 13; Ps. cxxxi. 7.

† Dr. Stanley.

Lord which filled it;’ but ‘great is the glory of this last house more than of the first,’* by reason of the continued corporal and visible presence therein of Him who was ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the very figure of his substance.’† The city of Bethlehem in Juda became the subject of inspired praise and prophecy, because it was chosen to be the birth-place of the Son of God; but it was from Nazareth, and not from Bethlehem, that He received his name, and ‘that was fulfilled which was said by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarite.’‡ Or again, Mount Thabor witnessed the transfiguration of our Lord, Mount Calvary his crucifixion, and Mount Olivet his ascension; but with what place was He ever so intimately and so permanently connected as with this humble cottage, where He ‘came in and went out’ among the children of men for so many years, before He was baptized by John in the Jordan?

‘The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin’s name was Mary.’§ This was, the beginning and the foundation of the ‘glory’ of this house, the Annunciation of our Blessed Lady therein, and the consequent Conception within her sacred womb of the Eternal Son of God. Presently she ‘rose up and went into the hill country,’ and was absent about three months, after which ‘she returned to her own house;’|| thereby again ‘glorifying’ this humble cottage by the presence of Almighty God, since, where Mary was, there was God Incarnate. By and by, when the days were well-nigh accomplished that she should be delivered, she went up ‘to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;’ and there Jesus is born into the world; there also He receives the adoration of the shepherds and of the wise men who had come from the East. Then they carried Him to Jerusalem for the Presentation in the temple, and ‘as soon as they had performed all things according to the law,’ they returned to ‘*their city Nazareth.*’ Next follows the flight into Egypt; after which, ‘being warned in sleep, they retire into the

* Agg. ii. 10.

† St. Matt. ii. 6, 23.

|| Ibid. v. 56.

† Heb. i. 3.

§ St. Luke i. 27.

quarters of Galilee,' and once more return to their ancient home: neither is there any reason to suppose that their residence there was any more interrupted, save only by the annual visits to Jerusalem, until the time when Jesus began his public ministry.

Thus we see that the house of our Blessed Lady in Nazareth was 'the house of God's majesty and the place of his feet' for well-nigh thirty years. As long as Jesus had any place 'where to lay his head,' that place was the house of his mother in the city of Nazareth; it was there that 'He was brought up.'* His neighbours and acquaintances spoke of Him as 'the son of Joseph of Nazareth,' or, more simply, as 'Jesus of Nazareth;' in his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people cried out, saying, 'This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee;' it was part of the title set upon his cross, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews;' his apostles also, after his ascension into heaven, and on the most solemn occasions, use the same language: 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk;' so too the angel, sitting in the Holy Sepulchre, said to the woman, 'You seek Jesus of Nazareth, he is risen, he is not here;' the very devils addressed Him by that name, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth?' nay, even our Lord Himself, from his throne of glory on the right hand of God, makes Himself known to Saul as 'Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.' In a word then, Nazareth was pre-eminently 'the city of Jesus,' and the house of the Blessed Virgin in that city was his *home*, the earthly home of God Incarnate. And when once we have realized this simple, yet stupendous, fact, no exercise of Almighty power, however marvellous, whereby He may have been pleased in after ages to glorify it, ought to seem strange or improbable in our eyes.

It is a feeling natural to the human breast, that men should set a value on their paternal homes, and take pleasure in preserving them; whole societies have before now been formed, and still exist, with the avowed object of watching over the continual preservation of the house of some famous patriot or philosopher, some immortal bard or triumphant warrior, and

* St. Luke iv. 16.

the destruction of these memorials would have been resented as indicating a want of respect for the memory of the departed. Why then should it be counted a strange thing that the home of One who was perfect man as well as God, should have been preserved by the Almighty hand of Him who occupied it, through a series of more than eighteen hundred years, so as still to remain amongst us even at the present day? Surely such a preservation would have been naturally attempted—and there is nothing impossible in supposing that it might even have been effected, had such been the good pleasure of God—by merely human means, the devout care and watchfulness of the Christian flock. And to the Catholic mind, accustomed to realize the intimate communion which exists between the visible and the invisible world, the fact that this preservation has not really been accomplished without a miraculous interposition of Divine power, does not present even a momentary difficulty. A Catholic, ‘believing rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ would think it naturally probable, or certainly not improbable, that the sacred spot in which that stupendous mystery was wrought should have been preserved to the devotion of the faithful throughout all ages. Whether the means by which it was so preserved were natural or supernatural, or partly one and partly the other, would be merely a question of history, in the solution of which he would be guided only by the evidence that might be alleged.

What then is the evidence upon which a Catholic believes in the story of the translation of the Holy House? I suppose that the great majority of Catholics, if they were questioned upon this subject, would immediately reply that though they have never looked into the matter for themselves, yet they believe it to be true, because they have always been told so, and because they know that their holy Mother the Church is far too wise and prudent to lend the sanction of her name to tales of miraculous events without careful examination, and without (at least) probable grounds for the truth of her decision. And who shall say that this answer would not be most just and reasonable? For life is not long enough for sifting and inquiring into everything, and there are a great many things which we must needs take, and which may safely

be taken, upon the credit of others. Moreover, the Church is cautious in her decisions on matters of this kind, *so* cautious, that we need not fear to trust her when she breaks her usual silence, and commends any particular miracle to the admiration of her children by so solemn an act as the institution of a yearly festival for its commemoration. There are others, however, in the Catholic world, and those not a few, though more perhaps in foreign countries than in our own,* who would give a different answer; who would say, 'I believed this story at first upon tradition, or upon authority; that is, because others told me so, or because it came to me recommended by the Church's sanction; but I have also carefully examined all the evidence that can be alleged for it, so that I am now satisfied of its truth upon other grounds, quite independent of the opinion either of my neighbours or of the Church—namely, upon the same grounds on which I believe any other fact in history about which there is a question; the arguments in favour of its truth seem to me infinitely stronger than any that can be urged against it, or (to state the same conclusion under another form) the difficulties in the way of believing it to be false seem to me infinitely stronger than the difficulties in the way of believing it to be true.'

In the following pages then it is proposed to lay before the reader such an account of the evidence as we think abundantly warrants the conclusion which we have stated, with the earnest hope that some at least of our Protestant fellow-countrymen may be induced to study it with the same diligence and impartiality with which we have endeavoured to write it. We know indeed that there are but too many amongst them, who, unwilling to allow to Almighty God the power of doing anything whose reasonableness and utility cannot be established satisfactorily to their own understandings, consider themselves privileged to reject the whole history at once and without any examination whatever, as manifestly absurd and false; men

* I know of no critical work on the subject in our language, excepting that by Dr. Kenrick, who is an American, and of which I have only seen an Italian translation; and the late Father Hutchison's two invaluable Lectures, which we must all most sincerely regret that the gifted author did not live to complete, according to his original design.

who do not scruple to trust to this prejudgment of theirs as though it were necessarily infallible, and more than sufficient to counterbalance the opposite belief of millions of Catholics of every nation under heaven, including hundreds and thousands of men of learning and ability who have believed, not on tradition, but on their own personal conviction. For such as these it is useless to write; for, even though it were possible to make the proof of the history as clear and cogent as that of a mathematical demonstration, yet they would still continue to speak of it as though it were an exploded fable, a matter on which there could not possibly be any difference of opinion, and which deserves to be remembered only that it may be quoted in controversy, as a striking specimen of the infamous impositions of priestcraft, and the ignorant superstition of Catholics generally. It is to be hoped, however, that there are other more sober-minded individuals, who do not dare to make their own minds the measure of Omnipotence, and who may be inclined to suspect that so extraordinary a tale would never have obtained such universal credence, if there had been absolutely nothing to be urged in its behalf; who might perhaps on this account alone be disposed to acknowledge that, even 'if there were no documentary evidence at all to be alleged, or if that which is alleged were shown to be hopelessly confused and uncertain, it would still remain the most rational hypothesis that, all things duly considered, could be formed concerning the Holy House, that it is in reality the Nazarethan home of the Sacred Infancy.'

When we come to examine in detail the evidence that can be alleged for the translation of the Holy House, there seem to be three points to which our attention should be especially called, or rather three principal epochs into which our inquiry will naturally divide itself. First, the evidence there is for supposing that the house of the Blessed Virgin, which it is certain from Holy Scripture was once in Nazareth, remained there undestroyed during more than 1200 years; secondly, the evidence for the fact of its translation from Nazareth into Dalmatia; and thirdly, the evidence for its translation from Dalmatia into Italy. We propose to arrange our remarks, as

far as may be, according to this triple division, as being the most simple and convenient.

To begin, then, with the important question of the preservation of our Blessed Lady's house in Nazareth during the first twelve centuries of the Christian era.

It is an old tradition,* and conformable to every thing we know of the habits of the early Christians, that this building, which had been consecrated by the continual presence of the incarnate Son of God during a space of nearly thirty years, had been set aside even by the Apostles themselves to sacred uses: but be this as it may, ancient authorities tell us, that when the Empress St. Helen visited the Holy Land, she raised churches and oratories in all the spots which had witnessed the principal events of our Lord's life in Palestine,† and we cannot suppose that she overlooked this one spot in particular, where the first foundations, as it were, of our salvation had been laid. Eusebius indeed dwells especially upon the magnificence of the churches she built at Bethlehem and Mount Olivet, as the scenes of the Nativity and Ascension; but Nicephorus Callistus gives us particulars about many other churches also, and especially says that she 'went down to Nazareth, and having found there the House of the Angelic salutation,‡ built a very pretty church to the Mother of God.' Doubtless testimony of this author is not so satisfactory as that of Eusebius would have been; nevertheless 'a tradition is not upset,' says Benedict XIV., 'by the circumstance that there are no cotemporary monuments of the fact handed down, when other later monuments of great weight are not wanting.' Indeed, it has been well said that the opposite assumption, viz., that no tradition is ancient or trustworthy, whose continuous existence is not vouched by contemporary documents, expunges half the history of the world at a blow.

* Adrichomius, 'Theatrum Terræ Sanctæ,' in Zabulon, n. 23, p. 41, ed. 1588.

† Paulinus, Ep. xi. ad Severum (ed. Antwerp. 1622): 'Ædificatis Basilicis contexit omnes et excoluit locos, in quibus salutaria nobis mysteria pietatis suæ *Incarnationis* et *Passionis* et *Resurrectionis* atque *Ascensionis* Sacramentis Dominus Redemptor impleverat.'

‡ Niceph. H. E. viii. 30.

In the seventh century we have the evidence of Adamnan,* which is repeated also by our own Venerable Bede,† that there were two churches in Nazareth; one erected where formerly had stood the house in which our Lord was brought up as a child; the other where the house had been in which the Angel Gabriel came to the Blessed Mary. And some writers, who deny the truth of the alleged miraculous translation of the house from Nazareth to Loreto in the thirteenth century, ground their denial in great measure upon the language of these writers: they acknowledge that it was in existence in the days of St. Helen in the fourth century, but they say that she destroyed it, and built a church in its stead. We may accept the former part of their statement, but reject the latter; for although it is true that St. Helen built a church there, it by no means follows that she should therefore have destroyed the house.

St. Cecilia's house in Rome was given to the Christians and converted into a church; but the bath-room, the special scene of the virgin martyr's sufferings and triumph, remained unaltered, and may be seen to this day. In like manner, the place of infamy in which St. Agnes was exposed became a church; but the sacred interest which attached to those particular chambers caused them to be retained as they still are. The Mamertine prisons in the same city, in which St. Peter was detained; the cave of St. Benedict at Subiaco; the little church of St. Francis at Assisi; and a hundred other places that might be named, are all instances of the same principle. In all these places the piety of Christians has caused churches to be built with a greater or less degree of magnificence, but always without destroying those particular spots which were in a more special manner the object of their devotion; and why should not St. Helen have done the same here also? Even if history were altogether silent upon the subject, there would still have been a strong *à priori* probability in favour of those who should have maintained that while the first Christian empress raised a temple (as it was only natural that she should) in this most holy place, she yet was careful not to destroy

* De Locis Sanctis ii. 6.

† De Loc. Sanct. c. 16, Op. t. iv. p. 435, ed. Giles.

that part of it which may justly be called the holy of holies, that chamber in which the Word was made flesh. But the truth is, that we are not altogether left to our own conjectures in this matter. John Phocas, a Greek priest, who visited the Holy Land in the year 1185—that is to say, a whole century before the alleged translation—and wrote an account of his travels, expressly mentions, in his description of this church, the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, that on the left-hand side, near the high altar, there is ‘an opening, through which *you descend by a few steps* into the ancient house of Joseph, in which the archangel made the joyful annunciation to the Blessed Virgin on her return from the fountain.’* We need not allow ourselves to be perplexed, because this author happens to have called it the house of Joseph instead of the house of Mary, for of course it might truly be called the house of either indifferently; neither again are we at present concerned with the Oriental tradition to which he alludes as to the occupation of our Blessed Lady at the precise moment of the angel’s visit; his testimony is quoted in this place, only for the sake of the information which he gives as to the position of the spot which was the scene of the Annunciation with reference to the general plan of the whole church; and upon this point his testimony is most important. Our Blessed Lady’s chamber, the *sanctum sanctorum* of this church, was somewhat below the level of the rest of the building; it was necessary to go down to it by a few steps, it was also on one side of the main building. The reader will see at once that this circumstance (which in a town like Nazareth, built on the brow of a hill,† was a very natural one) lends the strongest confirmation to what we have said as to the possibility of St. Helen’s church having included within itself, and not destroyed, the particular spot to which she desired to do honour; in fact, it is not too much to say that it distinctly proves it. Of course, this is not the only writer from whom we derive our knowledge of the interior of Our Lady’s church at Nazareth; on the contrary, we might quote a similar description from the pens of innumerable other travellers; such as Zuallard the Belgian, who

* Apud Acta SS. Bolland. Maii 2, tom. ii. p. 3.

† St. Luke iv. 29.

accompanied the Baron de Merode in his visit to those parts in the year 1586, and who says that to go to *the place where the Annunciation was made, which is below the level of the church*, you descend twelve steps. . . . There are the foundations of the house of Joseph, in which it is said that our Lord was brought up when He was a child ; but the remainder of the house has been miraculously transported by angels into Christendom, and is at present in Italy, in a city called St. Mary of Loreto.* Or we might quote the Spanish Franciscan, Di Calaorra,† who says that the house of our Blessed Lady was under the nave on the north side of the church, and that there was a flight of six steps to go down to it ; or again, in our own day, the Trappist Père Geramb, who tells us that ‘you descend out of the church into the place where Mary lived, by a broad and handsome staircase of white marble, and that on a marble slab underneath the altar there are engraven these words : *Verbum caro hic factum est.*’

We have chosen the testimony of the Greek, however, because it is the only one that belongs to a date anterior to that of the supposed removal of the house, so that any coincidence which may be discovered between it and the miraculous tale that is to follow is especially valuable. On the whole therefore it is perfectly certain that there is not the slightest inconsistency in supposing St. Helen to have built a church in honour of the Annunciation, and in the place where it happened, and yet to have left the chamber itself undisturbed ; and for many reasons which the reader will presently recognise, it is important that this point should be clearly established.

Before resuming the thread of our history, it will be well to make yet another remark upon the evidence of St. Adamnan and St. Bede. They speak, as we have seen, of two churches in Nazareth, one built where the angel appeared to Mary, the other where the house had been in which our Lord was brought up as a child ; and as both these high prerogatives are usually claimed for the House of Loreto, it is neces-

* Il devotissimo Viaggio di Gerus, lib. iv. p. 281. Romæ, 1587.

† Historia Cronologica della Prov. di Syria e Terra Santa, B. 2, c. 27 Italian Translation. Venice, 1694.

sary that we should observe that the second church appears to have been built on the place where St. Joseph carried on his business as a carpenter, and in which therefore our Lord may be said to have been brought up quite as truly as in his Mother's dwelling-house. The Père Geramb tells us that it is at the distance of 130 or 140 paces from the first church, and that it still retains the name of St. Joseph's shop. I only mention this for the sake of removing a difficulty which might otherwise perplex those who have an opportunity of consulting the original authorities to which we refer.

About a hundred years later than St. Bede, the church is again spoken of by the biographer of St. Willebald, the first Bishop of Reichstadt, who lived A.D. 775; or rather by the author of his 'Itinerary,' by some supposed to be his sister. 'Having performed their devotions,' it says,* 'they went on to Galilee, to the place where Gabriel first came to the Holy Mary. Here there is now a church, in the village of Nazareth. And this church Christians have often paid money for to the heathens, to prevent them from executing their purpose of destroying it.' William Archbishop of Tyre tells us that it was visited in the twelfth century by Tancred, and endowed by him with such magnificence, that it became the metropolitan church of all Galilee. A hundred years later still, it was watered by the tears of St. Francis of Assisi; and in the same century by those of St. Louis of France. The biographer of this royal saint has recorded that, as soon as he came in sight of Nazareth, he dismounted from his horse and kissed the ground; that he then went on to 'the place of the Incarnation,' heard Mass and received the holy Eucharist there, 'in the very chamber where the Virgin Mary our Lady was saluted by the angel, and was declared the mother of God;' after which he heard another Mass said 'at the high altar of the Church' by Odo the Cardinal-Bishop of Frascati and Legate of the Apostolic See.†

Nothing can be more precise and distinct than this testimony, which belongs to the autumn of 1253, six months before

* Apud Canis. Thesaur. ii. p. 110. See also Acta SS. Ord. Bened. iv. 374.

† Storia di S. Luigi IX. del Pietro Mattei, p. 171, lib. iii. Venice, 1628.

St. Louis left the Holy Land to return to his own kingdom, and forty years before the alleged translation of the chamber from Galilee to Dalmatia. It happens, however, that it is just during this very interval of forty years that some critics think they can find the surest proof of the destruction of the sacred building, and therefore of the nonentity of its subsequent translation. In the year 1263, that is, ten years after this visit of St. Louis, Pope Urban IV. wrote him a letter, in which he complains that the enemy have 'not only seized upon that venerable church in Nazareth, beneath whose roof the Virgin of virgins received the salutation of the angel and conceived of the Holy Ghost, but have even destroyed it: their wicked and sacrilegious ministers have in their fury levelled it to the very ground and altogether destroyed it.' This language is certainly very strong and plain; yet even though every word of it were strictly and literally true, it would still be possible that the chamber itself, the *ipsissimus locus Incarnationis*, had survived the wreck, because, as we have already seen, it was upon a lower level, and on one side of the main building; just as, in the case we have before alluded to, it might have been truly said under similar circumstances that the church of St. Agnes in the Piazza Navona at Rome had been levelled to the ground and utterly destroyed, and yet it might have been equally true that those chambers which constitute the chief interest of the building had remained uninjured; or as if any one had said of the Church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli at Assisi, that it was destroyed by the earthquake of 1832 (as it was), and yet the chapels, which are the principal objects of devotion there, escaped unhurt. However, there is good reason to suppose that Pope Urban had received a somewhat exaggerated account of the mischief that had been done. This may very well have happened; for the Infidels were rapidly regaining the ground they had lost, and it was only natural, therefore, that those Christians who still remained in the Holy Land should send to Europe, and especially to Rome, as sad a tale as they could, that so the flame of Christian zeal might be once more enkindled, and the chivalry of France and England once more persuaded to come forth and do battle against the Paynims, to rescue the holy places from their

hands. And there is some evidence that it really was so; for first, there is an ancient tradition,* that when the main body of the crusaders had abandoned the Holy Land, the Archbishop of Nazareth, together with the larger portion of his flock, made their peace with the Turks at the price of apostasy, and that it was on this occasion that the Church of the Annunciation was pulled down; only the *northern* part of it was preserved, because to that side was attached the Episcopal residence, the same which was afterwards occupied as a Franciscan monastery. Now since, as we have seen, it was precisely under this part that the *Santa Casa* lay, it is only reasonable to conclude that this also need not have been destroyed. But secondly, William de Bandensel,† a German nobleman, and a knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, who travelled in those parts with a private chaplain and a numerous retinue about the year 1336, in speaking of this place, says only that there had been here a large and beautiful church, but that it was now almost destroyed. If, after more than seventy years of unavoidable neglect on the one hand, and of exposure to the wanton injuries of malicious enemies on the other, a traveller could use such moderate language as this, we may be sure that the words of Pope Urban's letter do not really denote quite as much as at first sight they might seem to imply. It is not necessary that we should suppose the Pope to have been personally guilty of wilful exaggeration, scarcely even his informant; for, as the Italian proverb says,

‘Tempo di guerra,
Menzogne quanto la terra.’

But certainly we need not waste much time in proving that a church which was only ‘almost destroyed’ in 1336 cannot have been ‘altogether destroyed’ in 1263; and that it is quite possible, therefore, that a particular portion of that church which we know to have been in existence in 1253, may also have been in existence in 1291, which is the date of the alleged translation.

We need not hesitate, therefore, to pass on to an examina-

* P. F. Quaresmio di Lodi, *Historica, Theologica et Moralis Terræ Sanctæ Elucidatio*, tom. ii. lib. vii. c. 3, § 3.

† Canisii ‘*Thesaurus Monum.*’ tom. iv. p. 333, ed. 1725.

tion of the second subject of our inquiry, the evidence for its translation from Galilee into Dalmatia; but first we would just notice by the way how exactly the date of this event tallies with the known history of the times. I mean, that supposing it to have been God's will that the house should be preserved from destruction, we cannot conceive a more fitting time, or even, if we may use such an expression, a more necessary time, for His immediate interference in order to effect this purpose, than that which tradition has assigned. It is said to have taken place on May 10, 1291, just when the Christian rule in Palestine had received its death-blow by the fall of Acre, its last bulwark, on April 18 in that very year. Henceforward the Christian sanctuaries were exposed to all the injuries which the most inveterate malice could devise, and the most unlimited license execute; and as to the nature and extent of those injuries, one may form a tolerably correct idea from the letter of Pope Urban IV., which has been already quoted. If, then, it was in the counsels of the Divine Wisdom, that the chamber in which the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity took upon Him the nature of man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary should be preserved to all succeeding ages as a monument to confirm their faith, and excite their devotion towards that most adorable mystery, the interposition of a supernatural power seems now to have been imperatively called for. It may be said indeed that, had God so willed it, the same result might have been obtained in a far more natural way by bringing the Crusades themselves to a different termination, by causing them to be as glorious and triumphant in their issue as they were in fact disastrous, in which case there would have been no necessity for any visible interference with the natural order of events. But such an observation is best answered by repeating the words of St. Augustin : * 'Let us allow that it is possible for God to do some things, the reason of which we cannot investigate: in such matters the reason of the thing is to be sought for only in the power and in the will of Him who does them.'

It is said, then—and be it remembered that it is so far said by the Catholic Church as that she permitted an addition to

* Ep. 3. ad Volusianum, aliter Ep. 137, class 2.

that effect to be inserted in the Roman Martyrology under date of December 10,* and a lesson embodying the whole history to be added to the office provided for that day in the Roman Breviary†—that the house of our Blessed Lady in Nazareth was miraculously translated by the ministry of angels from Galilee to Dalmatia in the month of May 1291, and that it was again removed and transported into Italy on December 10, 1294. Now the first idea that strikes one in considering the authenticity of this history is this: supposing it not to be true, how exceedingly improbable it is that it should ever have been invented! Let us concede for a moment that it was possible, when first the house appeared at Loreto, to invent some story of its having been brought there by a miracle; yet what could have induced the inventors to pretend that it was brought from a place in Dalmatia rather than immediately from Galilee itself? This was not only to throw an apparent doubt upon its genuineness, upon its being really what they asserted it to be, the house in which our Lord had been conceived in Nazareth, but also to afford additional facility for detecting the imposture; since it was far easier to go or to send to Dalmatia and ascertain the truth of the report, than to run the risk of being murdered or imprisoned by the Turks in the course of a dangerous pilgrimage to Palestine. But in the next place, even though we should allow that for some inconceivable reason the inventors of the story were stupid enough to clog it with this most clumsy and untoward circumstance, yet how did they persuade the people of Dalmatia to lend themselves to the imposition? The people of Loreto, we will imagine, were so proud of the high honour which would attach to them as being supposed to be the chosen guardians of a very sacred treasure, that they were not likely to inquire too minutely into the history upon which such a supposition was based; all inconvenient criticism would be prevented by a very natural and pardonable vanity. But how came the natives of Dalmatia to exercise the same forbearance without the same motive, or rather in spite of every motive naturally urging them to the most severe and rigid

* By a decree of the Congregation of Rites, August 31, 1669.

† By a similar decree, September 16, 1699.

scrutiny? The sacred house had been transported from the Holy Land (so said the story), because that land had fallen into the hands of enemies to the Christian faith, who would insult and perhaps destroy it; it had been brought into a Christian land, to an eminence between the towns of Tersatto and Fiume (about sixty miles south of Trieste, on the eastern side of the Adriatic Gulf), and it remained there for the space of three years and a half, when it was again removed and carried into Italy. Did not this second removal seem to speak the same language as the first? to cast an imputation upon the character of those from whom the house was taken? to imply that they were not worthy of it any more than the Turks had been? We are not presuming ourselves to pry into the hidden counsels of God, and to assign this as the real motive of the second translation; but we say that this is what would naturally occur to any man as soon as he heard of it; nay more, that this is what the earliest historians of the sanctuary actually said; and we ask whether the Dalmatians were likely, without good reason, to acknowledge a fact which seemed so manifestly to redound to their discredit, silently to acquiesce in a tradition which could not fail to be so interpreted by the great majority of those to whose knowledge it might be brought? Surely it does not require any intimate knowledge of human nature to feel confident that such a tradition could never have taken deep root among a people unless it had been founded on fact. And yet not only is the tradition recorded by some of their own authors; not only was its memory preserved by a church, in imitation of the original house, built upon the spot from which it had been removed, with an inscription engraven upon its walls, declaring that 'this is the place where was formerly the most holy house of our Blessed Lady, which is now at Recanati;'* not only has it been perpetuated by the establishment, by Gregory XIII., in Loreto itself of a college, which still remains, for students from the Illyrian nation; not only, I say, is the existence of such a tradition attested in these and other ways, but also still more unequivocally (because more popularly) by the fact of innumerable pilgrims having always come year after

* Rainaldi, 'Annales' ad A.D. 1294.

year, century after century, from that part of Dalmatia to the sanctuary of Loreto, there to lament over their heavy loss, and to entreat our Blessed Lady to return to them. 'I was sitting in the church at Loreto, hearing confessions,' writes Father Riera in the year 1559, 'when I heard a most unusual disturbance and the sound of much crying and groaning; I came out of the confessional to inquire into its cause, and there at the threshold of the church I saw kneeling from four to five hundred Dalmatians, men, women, and children, divided into different companies, each company under the direction of a priest, and all crying out with sighs and tears, "Return, return to us, O Mary! O most holy Mary, return to Fiume." Touched with compassion for their distress, I drew near to a venerable priest who was amongst them, and asked the cause of their sorrow; with a deep sigh he answered, "Ah! they have only too much cause;" and again he repeated with still greater energy, "Return, return to us, O Mary." When they advanced within the church, and arrived where they could see the entrance to the holy house, their cries and their sobs grew yet louder. I tried as well as I could to assuage their grief, and to direct them to look for consolation from heaven; but the old man interrupted me and said, "Suffer them to weep, father; their lamentations are only too reasonable; that which you now possess was once ours." At last I was obliged to exert my authority to restore order and enforce silence; and, indeed, their prayers were so earnest, that I could not but fear that God would listen to their request.' He tells us that this was only in an extraordinary degree a specimen of what he had witnessed every year that he was at Loreto, and had happened (so he was told) every year from time immemorial; persons from Fiume and its neighbourhood, only not usually in such great numbers, coming over the sea to visit the house of Loreto, and to entreat the Blessed Virgin to restore it to them. The testimony of Father Torsellino forty years later, that is, 300 years after the supposed loss, is equally distinct; he says that 'these pilgrims came every year in shoals (*catervatim quotannis*), and quite as much to lament over their own loss as to do honour to the house of Mary.' Father Renzoli repeats the

same at the end of the next century; and we learn from the Archdeacon Gaudenti that it still continued in the year 1784.

Now, although of course the impositions of priestcraft are quite as possible on one side of the Adriatic as on the other, still it is worth while to enquire what kind of motives it can have appealed to, what passions of the human heart it can have enlisted on its side, when first it devised this deceit, and attempted to impose it upon the people. For let priestcraft be as clever and as potent as the most ignorant or the most zealous Protestant can imagine, still as long as it is only natural, not miraculous, as long as it is something short of magic, it can only influence others by means of the ordinary motives and principles of human action, roused into activity by false appearances perhaps, and aiming at wrong ends, but still the same motives. But which of these motives can be imagined in the present instance powerful enough to have produced the result that has been described? Not vain-glory, for, as has been already said, the story was manifestly to the general discredit of the inhabitants of that country, whether clergy or laity; not sordid interest, for how could it profit the priests of Fiume and Tersatto that their flock should go on pilgrimages and make offerings to the distant shrine of Loreto? not a mere love of the marvellous, for this might have been quite as effectually gratified by applying the same story to the shrine which they still had at home; not even a desire to gain spiritual privileges and indulgences, for these had been bestowed with a most liberal hand upon their own sanctuary by many successive popes, from Urban V. in the fourteenth century down to Clement XI. at the beginning of the eighteenth. In a word, it is difficult to conceive what could have persuaded the Dalmatians to depreciate a church of their own country, singularly enriched both temporally and spiritually, to confess that it was a mere memorial and imitation of a marvellous original which they had once had and now had lost, and to put themselves to great inconvenience to go and visit that lost original elsewhere, excepting only a deep and settled conviction that the history of the two churches was precisely such as it is commonly supposed to be; and is it possible that such a conviction should have been created, so as to become a living

and powerful source of action in the mind of a whole people, by anything short of the truth? At any rate, it is impossible to deny but that the Dalmatian tradition furnishes reasonable evidence of as much as this, that a building which was believed to be the house in which the Word was made flesh in Nazareth was once in their country, and is now in Italy; or rather (that we may not overstate the case, even in the minutest particular) that it is no longer where it was, and that what is shown at Loreto is so extremely like it, that they have been deceived by it, and cannot detect the difference. And this is all that in this place we care to establish.

The tradition next goes on to say that at the end of about three years and a half after its original appearance in Dalmatia, that is, on December 10, 1294, the Holy House was miraculously transported across the sea, and set down in a wood about a mile from the shore, on the opposite coast of Italy (this wood belonging to one whose name was Laureta, whence Loreto);* that it was visited there by innumerable persons, but that wicked men took advantage of the vicinity of the wood to conceal themselves in it and to commit acts of violence upon the pilgrims, so that it was very soon

* Such is the almost unanimous testimony of ancient writers on this subject: otherwise the etymology given by Scotti at p. 209 of his 'Itinerario d' Italia,' Roma, 1650, seems preferable—viz., that the wood itself was called *Lauretum*. Father Roëstius, S. J., seems to consider it an open question: 'Apologia pro Dom. Laur.' part i. c. xxi. § 15. The name *Loreta* appears as the christian name of ladies in that neighbourhood in wills and other legal documents of the years 1400, 1418, &c.; but I do not know that it has ever been found in any more ancient documents; and if this be so, it would seem more probable that the name came to be used in honour of the sanctuary of our Lady of Loreto, than that the sanctuary came to be so called in consequence of its temporary sojourn on the property of a lady happening to bear that name. Names taken from the principal mysteries and festivals of our Blessed Lady have always been very common in Italy, e. g. Annunziata, Concetta, &c. See Martorelli, ii. p. 406. The Litany of Loreto, as it is commonly called, is much more ancient than its name, having been extant at least as early as the beginning of the fifth century. Perhaps it acquired its present name from the fact that on Saturdays it is sung with great solemnity in the Holy House of Loreto, and perhaps in former days pilgrims hearing it there for the first time, spoke of it as the Litany of Loreto. See Hutchison, p. 44.

removed to an eminence at some little distance; here also it attracted the public devotion so powerfully, that the two brothers to whom the hill belonged soon began to quarrel as to the proper way of disposing of the numerous offerings which were made; and finally, after another short interval, it was again removed, without human help, to a spot on the highway of Recanati, where it has ever since remained. We have to inquire whether this story is a true narration of facts, or merely a fabulous invention.

Here, again, the first reflection which occurs to a thoughtful and candid mind is this: if the story be false, why did the inventor make it so extremely clumsy? We presume that he wished it to be believed, and did his best therefore to secure its being believed; why, then, did he multiply the chances of detection by pretending three translations instead of one? and how had he not the wit to see that three translations within the distance of a few miles and in the space of a single year, wrought by superhuman agency, would be looked upon with most keen suspicion by everybody jealous for the honour and glory of God? Would it not seem, if we may be allowed to use such language with reverence, as if Almighty God had not from the first thoroughly known his own mind, what He proposed to do with the house, or as if He had not foreseen, or had been unable to provide against, the inconveniences and dangers to which it proved to be exposed in each of its successive resting-places? Surely everybody must allow that the whole story is as far from being probable in the sense of being like some truth (*verisimile*), as far from being likely to deceive people and to win their uninquiring assent by its plausibility, by the mere force of its apparent truthfulness, as any thing that can possibly be imagined: and yet the people *were* deceived; the story *has* gained universal credence; and the spots which were consecrated by the merely temporary presence of the sacred building have always been known and pointed out. Of course, if the story is true, all these difficulties instantly disappear; *magna est veritas et prævalebit*; facts are stubborn things, and when they are proved, supersede the necessity of arguments: and so, if the triple translation was a fact, it is not strange that it should have been believed; but if, on the

other hand, it was a human invention, we can neither comprehend the stupidity of him who devised it, nor the simplicity of those who received it.

We may also still further observe that, supposing the triple translation to be true, we can see at once what a powerful effect it must have had on the minds of all who were witnesses of it in the way of predisposing them to believe the extraordinary story which they were presently to hear as to what this house or chamber really was, and whence it originally came. We are told that it made its appearance on the shores of Italy towards the very end of the year 1294, and that it was not till some time in 1296 that it was known to be the house of our Blessed Lady from Nazareth. From the first it was recognised as a sacred building, belonging in an especial manner to the Holy Virgin, because it contained an image of her, carved in cedar-wood, and an altar, and because of the many favours which were received there by those who called upon her name; but more than a twelvemonth was permitted to elapse before it was made known to them (by means of a vision granted to some pious soul) that it was the very chamber of the Incarnation, which had been once in Nazareth, afterwards transported to Dalmatia, and now brought to Italy. This was a most marvellous history; yet who could say that it was too marvellous to be true, when they had themselves been witnesses of its repeated removal, even within the limits of their own territory, and knew therefore that it was certainly something very sacred, and in a special manner the object of Divine care? Moreover, these repeated translations, if they be true, had the effect of multiplying witnesses of the miracle, or at least evidence of its truth, to an almost indefinite extent. On the whole, therefore, turn the legend which way we will, its texture is such, that what appear at first sight to be its extravagancies and extreme improbabilities prove, on a more minute investigation, to be real arguments in its favour; on the theory of its falsehood, they are inexplicable; on the theory of its truth, they receive a rational solution.

But let us not dwell any longer on these preliminary considerations; perhaps some of our readers may complain that we have already dwelt upon them too long; nevertheless, if

we desired to do justice to our subject, they were far too important to be omitted; indeed, it would hardly be too much to say that they form the *principal* part of our subject, for I suppose it is undeniable that the reasons for which the whole story is so laughed to scorn by the Protestant world consist entirely in its antecedent improbabilities and apparent strangeness. They will not pretend to say that they reject it only because they do not think it supported by sufficient historical evidence, any more than ordinary Catholics receive it because they are satisfied with that evidence. On the contrary, whenever a Protestant writer has condescended to enter on any critical examination of the evidence, he has always found it necessary first, to apologise to his readers for the insult he may seem to be offering to their understanding by treating the subject with any seriousness at all, as though the idea of a house being carried through the air for any religious purpose were not a self-evident absurdity. And yet it is hard to see why it should be so thought by any who profess to believe in Him who once said, 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, and shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence thither, it shall remove.' *

At length, however, we will proceed to enumerate the principal authors to whom we are indebted for the preservation of the legend of the Holy House, as we at present have it.

The earliest authentic account, of which we have a sufficiently distinct notice to make it worth while to mention it in this place, was drawn up by the Bishop of Recanati, though at the time he wrote he was only the rector or president of the Sanctuary. Peter George Tolomei had come from Teramo in the Abruzzi to serve in this church of Sta. Maria di Loreto as early as the year 1430, and was promoted to the highest rank in it twenty years afterwards. He compiled a short history for the use of the innumerable pilgrims who came there; and he executed his task so well, that Pope Gregory XIII. selected this account a hundred years afterwards to be translated into the Arabian, Greek, Illyrian, German, French, Spanish, and Latin languages, for the same purpose. He seems to have taken great pains in collecting

* St. Matt. xvii. 19.

the testimony of the inhabitants. Of course it was impossible that any of that generation should have been himself an eye-witness of the miracle; they could only say what they had been told by others before them. He found two persons in particular (whom he names, and who could be identified therefore and examined by any who had chosen to do so at the time he wrote) whom he examined upon oath; the first swore he had often heard his grandfather say that *his* grandfather had seen with his own eyes the house of Loreto coming over the sea like a ship, and that he saw it land in the midst of the wood, which ran along the coast; the second swore that he had often heard his grandfather say that he himself had frequently visited the shrine whilst yet it remained in that wood, and that during his time the angels removed it and carried it to the hill belonging to the two brothers. It might seem at first sight as if there were a discrepancy between these two testimonies, inasmuch as there is an apparent difference of two generations in the persons who saw the first arrival of the shrine and its removal from the wood to the hill, events which are said to have taken place within a few months of one another; but our author expressly tells us that the grandfather of the second witness lived to the extraordinary age of 120 years, so that in fact the witnesses were contemporaneous, though of most unequal ages.

Six years after the death of Teramano, as this author, from the place of his nativity, is generally called (that is, in the year 1479), there came to Loreto a very learned and distinguished ecclesiastic from another part of Italy, the provincial of the Carmelite order, from Mantua, and he too wrote a history, which he dedicated to the Cardinal della Rovere, at that time Bishop of Recanati, in which he professes to follow the authentic narration of Teramano; only he quotes an additional authority for it—which Teramano too had very probably seen and made use of, though he does not mention it—a very old tablet hung up in the chapel itself. He describes this tablet as almost rotten and consumed by age; so that it may have been written not very long after the first arrival of the house.

About forty or fifty years later, the history was re-written

with still greater care and minuteness by Girolamo Angelita, a great antiquary, and enjoying by reason of his official situation—which had been also held by his father and grandfather before him, and seems to have been almost hereditary in his family, the chancellorship of the city of Recanati—many singular advantages for the thorough execution of his task. He tells us that he had sifted with the most faithful and diligent accuracy all the ancient annals of the Republic, of whose archives he was the appointed guardian; he had examined the records also which had been received during his own lifetime from Fiume and Tersatto, and been sent to Leo X. at Rome; and he dedicated the result of his researches to the reigning Pontiff, Clement VII. Copies of this work are still extant; and the only important circumstance which it contains that is wanting in earlier histories is the exact date of the two translations, which are precisely the facts that his situation and the documents that had been sent from Dalmatia might have enabled him with the greater certainty to establish.

As a matter of evidence, we need hardly examine in detail the writers of later date, because of course they differ in nothing essential from those who have gone before them; one only deserves special mention perhaps, as being generally called the Father of the History of Loreto, not for his antiquity but for his painstaking accuracy and completeness, especially with reference to miraculous cures and other favours that had been received in this sanctuary; I mean Father Horace Tursellino, the Jesuit, whose work, embodying all that had been collected by his predecessor Father Riera, as well as all that he had succeeded in discovering himself, was published in Rome in five books in 1597, and was afterwards translated into Italian, with the addition of a sixth book, by Father Zucchi. The whole of these three works, together with the earlier ones that have been mentioned, and very copious extracts from innumerable others, were republished by Monsignor Martorelli in the middle of the last century, in a work in two volumes folio, intituled '*Teatro Istorico della Santa Casa Nazarena*,' a work which may truly be said to exhaust the subject, and to which we must therefore refer all persons who desire to investigate the evidence with still greater minuteness

than is done in the present chapter. As a matter of authority, however, we may be allowed to enumerate a few of the most distinguished names that appear among the list of writers who have defended the authenticity of the miraculous translation, such as Baronius, Rainaldi, Canisius, Suarez, Cornelius a Lapide, Natalis Alexander, the Bollandists, and Benedict XIV.; and since, as Melchior Canus says, 'whatever historian the Church has given credit to we need not fear to trust,' it may be worth while to add that the whole history of the quadruple translation, together with the causes of each, is incorporated in a brief of Pope Julius II., bearing date of the 1st November, 1502. It is related also, as we have already said, but in a more compendious form, in the Roman Breviary; and although, as everyone knows, 'the contents of that book are not proposed to the Church as defined, or as obliging the faithful, and the historical facts which it contains may be subjected to a fresh examination, and may even be criticised by private scholars, provided it is done with moderation and respectfulness, and not without grave reason' (especially, as Benedict XIV. says, when more ancient monuments are opposed to them), still it may safely be asserted that such facts receive no slight degree of authority from being thus mentioned by the Church; for even looking upon her merely as possessed of the human gifts of learning, memory, and talent, she is an authority that cannot be lightly despised by any who value historical truth.

Should it be objected, however, that after all there is but a slender amount of really historical evidence to support so extraordinary a tale, that a chain cannot be stronger than its weakest link, and since none of the evidence is strictly contemporary with the event, no amount of subsequent repetitions can remedy this radical defect, we need not hesitate to allow that it is not evidence such as could bear the strict anatomy of obstinate incredulity; still no one can pretend that it is absolutely without weight, and it is certainly sufficient to involve in considerable perplexity any who should undertake to defend the opposite theory, and to demonstrate that the tale is false. And this is all that is necessary to justify the Catholic belief upon the subject; for the story of the translation of the Holy

House has come down to us from very ancient times by tradition; it is not that the Catholics of this, or of any preceding, generation have dug it out of some ancient legendary, or chronicle of wonders, and then proposed it to the belief of their brethren as a new fact in history which they had recently discovered, but which could certainly be proved by the allegations of trustworthy authors. We believe it, and our fathers before us for many generations have always believed it, *on tradition*. ‘By tradition,’ says one whose words will be familiar to most of my readers,* ‘by tradition is meant what has ever been said, as far as we know, though we do not know how it came to be said, and for that very reason think it true, because else it would not be said;’ and again, ‘tradition therefore being information, not authenticated, but immemorial, is a *prima facie* evidence of the facts which it witnesses. It is sufficient to make us take a thing for granted, in default of real proof; it is sufficient for our having an opinion about it; but being an anonymous informant, it is of force only under the proviso that it cannot be plausibly disputed.’ The *onus probandi* lies with those who would destroy the existing belief. We may use the same argument here, then, as has before now been used for the defence of Christianity itself; we may say, in the very words of the author to whom we allude: ‘the existence of this testimony is a phenomenon; the truth of the fact solves the phenomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have some other to rest in; and none, even by our adversaries, can be admitted which is not consistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at present, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.’† Let the scoffers, then, at the miraculous translation of the house of Loreto come forward and explain to us the origin and history of the evidence that has been adduced; let them tell us how it arose, how it came to be credited; or, if they cannot show by positive accounts how it *did*, yet let them allege some probable hypothesis how it *might* have arisen. For myself, I cannot conceive, and I do not remember ever to

* Newman’s ‘Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics,’ p. 45.

† Paley’s ‘Evidences,’ Preparatory Considerations.

have heard of, any other answer to this challenge than one of these two: either the building must have been raised in some extraordinary manner in a single night, or if in longer time, at least in the deepest secrecy, without a single human witness that was not a participator in the imposture, and with such consummate skill that when the story was circulated, it looked not like a thing of yesterday, but like a building nearly 1300 years old; or, the building must have been old, well known to all the neighbourhood and always held in veneration, yet its real history lost, and then this lying fable substituted in its stead.

The first of these hypotheses is so preposterously absurd, that it is difficult to believe that it can ever have been seriously entertained by any reasonable being; and, indeed, when first I met with it in the pages of an English Annual, I imagined that the writer had himself invented it for the purpose of enlivening his pages and making his readers laugh; subsequently, however, I found the same story in the letters of a foreign Protestant, whose travels enjoyed a certain degree of reputation towards the end of the seventeenth century, and were evidently the source whence our English friend had borrowed the happy idea. 'It was under the Pontificate of Boniface VIII. that this pretended miracle happened; and if you make any reflection on the life of that famous fox, who is represented in all histories as the most cunning, the most ambitious, and most covetous of all the men in the world; and if you add to these considerations that of his power and authority, you will grant without difficulty that he was a man fit to undertake such a cheat as this.' So writes M. Misson; * *credat Judæus Apella, Non ego*. However, even M. Misson does not seem to be altogether satisfied with this *a priori* proof; so he goes on to allege one or two circumstances in support of his conjecture; and these we will lay before our readers in the language of his English copyist. He says that 'it very well *might* so happen, for that the Jesuits (wonderful Jesuits, to have had a hand in this business too, only two or three centuries before they were in existence!) 'have been accused before now of building an entire mill in one night near

* A New Voyage to Italy, vol. i. p. 334, ed. 1714.

Granada in Spain, in comparison with which the holy cottage is but a trifle ;' and (by way of further corroboration) 'the walls of the holy cottage are built much as other walls, but the bricks are ill joined and clumsily put together, which plainly evinces that the structure has been raised with greater expedition than skill.' The writer of these silly lines probably thought that this fungus-like origin of a famous Catholic sanctuary was a capital joke. We certainly need not be at the pains of refuting it; a single observation will suffice, viz. that the house does not happen to be built of bricks at all, as most of the buildings in that neighbourhood are, but of a fine-grained limestone, the like of which is not to be found within thirty or forty miles of the place.

The second hypothesis is this : that the building had been always a sacred one, perhaps even originally built in imitation of the house at Nazareth, in consequence, says Dean Stanley, 'of some peasant's dream, or the return of some Croatian chief from the last Crusade, or the story of some Eastern voyager landing on the coast,' but that its history was subsequently lost, or at least so far corrupted, as that the building came to be accounted the original of that of which it was in truth only a copy. This hypothesis is, as far as I know, the only one which has ever been adopted by any Catholic writer who has refused to believe the miraculous translation; certainly it is the only one which bears even a semblance of probability; but when it is looked into more carefully, even this semblance disappears.

In the first place, how does this supposition account for the several successive translations from Dalmatia to Italy, and from one place to another, more than once, even in Italy itself? 'Very probably,' it has been said,* 'all these various

* Calmet, 'Dizion. della Bibbia,' in art. *Nazareth*, tom. ii. p. 48, ed. Lucca. It should be mentioned that Calmet himself subsequently retracted this rash conjecture, and authorised his Italian translator, Manzi, to correct it. This permission however did not arrive in time to allow of the correction being made in its proper place in the text of the work which had been already printed, but only in the translator's preface. Hence arises the confusion which may be observed in authors who have written on this subject; some quoting Calmet's authority in support of the miraculous legend, others against it.

translations were only different chapels built after the form and fashion of the house at Nazareth, just as we see in many places sepulchres built in imitation of the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem.' But wherefore should there have been three such within the space of a single mile, and yet so rarely met with elsewhere that not even Calmet himself mentions another instance? Above all, how does this supposition account for the keen sense of loss, the memory of which still lives among the Dalmatians? If they had once had a similar copy and it had been destroyed, yet why should they grudge to the Italians a memorial which, if they pleased, they might so easily renew for themselves? nay which, in point of fact, if this theory were true, they had already renewed; for from an early period in the fourteenth century they had had a church built more or less according to the model of that at Loreto.

But secondly, if we look at the building itself, we shall easily see that it can only be either the original, or designed to be mistaken for such: there is no middle term; either it is truth or it is a gross imposition; there is no room for a *mistake*. For first, the house (or chamber, as it might more properly be called) has no foundations. One bent upon practising a deceit might have done this; or if the translation of the house were miraculous, it might have been so brought; but surely such a thing could never have happened to a shrine built expressly as a memorial, and intended to endure as such to succeeding ages. The fact that the house of Loreto really is without foundations cannot be doubted; it is mentioned by all the earliest historians of the sanctuary; it was formally examined by several persons prior to the raising of the new fabric in the reign of Clement VII., amongst the rest by Angelita himself, who has left an account of it; and again in the reign of Benedict XIV., in the last century, when the pavement of the house was taken up and renewed. On this last occasion five bishops were present, three architects, and three master-masons, besides others; and all fully satisfied themselves of the truth of the popular belief on this matter. One of the masons was not contented until he had dug out a sufficient quantity of earth from beneath the wall to allow of his introducing his body under it in a stooping attitude and

examining it in all directions; and after the examination, a statement of the facts was drawn up, sworn to, and properly signed by these persons, in the presence of witnesses, and with all the formalities of a legal document.

Moreover, Teramano, Angelita, and the rest tell us that the people of Recanati sought to provide against the evil consequences which might naturally be apprehended from this essential defect by building a wall round the house, which, however, could never be brought to attach itself to the original wall of the house itself: and this fact too is attested by the same clear evidence as the want of foundations; for it rests on the testimony of Nerucci, the architect employed by Clement VII., and of many others, amongst whom may be specially mentioned John Eck,* Vice-chancellor of the University of Ingoldstadt, and the well-known opponent of Luther, who at that time examined the building and ascertained that the space between the two walls was such as to admit of a boy walking all round the house between them. Angelita was there when the boy did it; and sixty years afterwards, A.D. 1580, when Riera was compiling his history, many persons were still living who had known the boy and had heard him say that he had done it: † and when, under Pope Leo X., the old outer wall which was of bricks, was removed, and they proceeded to build a stronger one to be encrusted with marble in its stead, we are expressly told that the architect, Rainerius Nerucci, who had beheld the prodigy with his own eyes, left the same interval in order that the memory of so signal a wonder might not perish (*quod veteris miraculi monumentum foret*).‡

Another circumstance may very properly be insisted upon in this place, although it has been already mentioned in a cursory manner elsewhere, viz. that the materials of which the building is composed are not to be found within thirty or forty miles of Loreto, whereas one of the three prelates whom Clement VII. sent to Dalmatia and to Palestine for the express purpose of testing the truth of the tradition, as far as might be, by an examination of the various localities, brought away with him two stones of the kind generally used in the buildings of

* Apud Martorelli, i. p. 557.

† Torsellino, Storia, &c., p. 40.

‡ Ibid. p. 100.

Nazareth, and they were found exactly to correspond with the stones of the holy house. Dean Stanley, indeed, has ventured to assert that the walls of the house at Loreto 'appear to be of a dark red polished stone, wholly unlike anything in Palestine.' But everybody who has ever visited Loreto knows how extremely difficult it is for any ordinary persons to make a satisfactory examination of the real nature of the stone of which the walls are composed. 'They are so discoloured by age, and so covered over with a sort of varnish caused by the smoke of the lamps perpetually burning there, and the kisses and the rubbing of devout pilgrims, that they have become, at least to a certain height, quite polished.' Moreover, 'at the time of Clement VII., when several alterations were made in the Holy House, it was thought well to point the walls with mortar, so as to close up the interstices between the stones, so that they might not be easily pulled out and carried away by the indiscreet piety of the faithful. This mortar was, of course, made of the materials on the spot—that is, of the red volcanic stone of the neighbourhood—which, when pounded up, makes an excellent cement. It is, in the main, to this mortar that the red tint seen at Loreto is due; and as in some places it was applied in large pieces, it might often be easily taken, on a cursory inspection, for the stone itself.' Some persons have even thought that the walls were built of bricks; but this may easily be seen to be false, because, though generally brick-like in form, the stones are of different sizes and thicknesses. Even the Protestant M. Misson, whom we have quoted, seems to have been more successful in his study of the materials than some more recent travellers. He speaks of the 'studied affectation' of the builders in using 'bricks of unequal sizes and of different kinds, *mixed with some flat and grayish or reddish stones.*' However, the whole question as to the nature of the materials of the building has lately been cleared up in the most satisfactory manner.

A short time after the publication of Dean Stanley's work, his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, knowing that Monsignor Bartolini was about to make a pilgrimage to Nazareth, sent him the passages from the book which related to Nazareth and Loreto, and begged him to make special examination on the

points referred to in those passages. As he was a person of consideration in Rome, he was enabled to obtain from the Holy Father permission to remove some small portions of stone from the walls of the Holy House, and to have them analysed. Such a permission was probably never before granted, and the prelate availed himself of it to good purpose. He enclosed in separate papers some specimens of stone which he had brought from Nazareth; also two stones from the Holy House at Loreto which were in the possession of the Cardinal-Vicar of Rome, and some others which he himself removed from the same walls. He then sent all these to the Professor of Chemistry at the Sapienza in Rome, in order that he might analyse them. The Professor was not told where the respective parcels came from. He submitted them to analysis, and reported that *all* were limestone—the stone of Nazareth, not the volcanic stone of Loreto—and that there was no material difference between them.*

These facts then being so, we have a right to reject the explanation suggested by Calmet as insufficient and false. This Holy House of Loreto was certainly not an ordinary building, whose real history being lost, an attempt was made in later ages to connect it by a marvellous tale with the scene of the Incarnation. Such an explanation, while getting rid of one miracle, substitutes a dozen others in its stead; it leaves, that is, a dozen facts utterly inexplicable on any ordinary principles of human reasoning. In a word, may we not confidently say that all the facts and circumstances which we have enumerated are utterly incompatible with any theory whatever, save that only one which history has recorded and monuments attest, which Popes have sanctioned and the faithful universally received, and to which God himself would seem to have set his seal by the innumerable wonders that He has wrought there?

History and monuments—in other words, the evidence of authors and of facts—have already been sufficiently examined; and the general belief of the faithful is too notorious to stand in need of any proof; in fact, it is the very thing with which our adversaries upbraid us. A few words, however, will not

* Abridged from the second of Father Hutchison's lectures, pp. 77–82.

be out of place upon the other two points that have been here alluded to: the sanction of the Church through the declaration of Popes, and the sanction of Almighty God through the instrumentality of miracles or other special outpourings of his grace.

Of the sixty-five Popes who have filled the chair of Peter since the miraculous translation took place, forty-four have in one way or other given their sanction to the story; some by the grant of indulgences or other privileges, some by the introduction or confirmation of new lessons in the Breviary, some by making pilgrimages there themselves, some even by writing in its defence; whilst of the twenty-one who do not happen to have spoken upon the subject, seven lived before the return of the Popes from Avignon (where, of course, it was impossible that they should have had so accurate a knowledge of what was going on in Italy), and seven others reigned for a very few weeks or months, so that they left scarcely any memorial behind them at all. Our space will not allow us to do more than briefly allude to a few who have spoken more fully or more distinctly than the rest. Pope Paul II., in 1471, speaks of the house and image (for within the house there was brought, and has always remained, a very ancient image of our Lady, carved in cedar-wood*) of the glorious and Blessed Virgin having been, *according to the assertion of persons who may be depended on*, translated by a company of the angelic host, and by the wonderful goodness of God set down at Loreto, without the walls of Recanati; and that great and stupendous and innumerable miracles had been wrought there by means of the same most merciful Virgin, *as we in our own person have expe-*

* On February 16, 1797, the Commissaries of the French Directory, having already seized upon the sanctuary and carried off all its treasures, had this venerable image transported to Paris, where it was treated as a profane curiosity. In a French catalogue of the time, it was described as a statue of some Eastern wood, and as belonging to the Egyptian-Jewish school. After having been venerated for awhile in the church of Notre Dame at Paris, it was restored by Buonaparte to Pope Pius VII. at his pressing request. When it arrived in Rome the Pope had it placed at first in his own chapel of the Quirinal, then exposed for three days in a church in the city, and finally restored to Loreto in December 1802.—F. Hutchison, p. 43.

rienced. He was cured of the plague there, and also our Blessed Lady appeared and announced to him that he would be chosen Pope. Marcellus II. had a similar revelation whilst saying mass in the Holy House. Clement VII. says that in his time many and great miracles are worked daily in this place. Leo X. and Paul III. say it is proved to be the very house in which the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us 'by the testimony of persons worthy of belief;' Innocent XII., that it is proved by the declarations of Popes, by the veneration of the whole world, by the continual operation of miracles and the outpouring of heavenly favours. Pius V. had the Agnus Dei, which he consecrated, stamped with a representation of the Holy House, with the inscription, '*Verè domus florida, quæ fuit in Nazareth.*' Benedict XIV. enumerates, as the proofs of its authenticity, ancient monuments, unbroken tradition, the declarations of Popes, the common belief of the faithful, and continual miracles; finally, Pope Pius IX., writing within a few weeks after his accession to the throne, and sending as an offering to the shrine of Loreto the pectoral cross and the ring which he had worn as Bishop, says that, being anxious to give some public token of the zeal and devotion which he had always felt towards the Blessed Virgin even from his earliest years, he wished that this testimony should be offered in that most august and sacred building, which, by an unheard-of prodigy, had been brought over immense tracts of sea and land from Galilee to Italy, and by God's great goodness been placed many ages ago within the States of the Church; which had been rendered famous by so many miracles, and by an immense concourse of the faithful; in which, as trustworthy monuments attest (*veluti gravissima monumenta testantur*), the Blessed Virgin had been saluted by the angel, and through the operation of the Holy Ghost been made the Mother of God.

To these testimonies of the Popes, must be added those of the Saints, very many of whom have been filled with a most tender and loving devotion to the Holy House, and experienced wonderful proofs of God's special blessing on that sacred spot. Thus, St. Francis Xavier, when saying mass there, receives an inspiration to devote himself to the conversion of the East.

St. Francis Borgia is suffering from fever, when he sets out on a pilgrimage to Loreto. As he approaches the House, the fever diminishes and altogether disappears at the moment he reaches it. St. James della Marca, at the age of thirty-three, is here delivered once for all from grievous temptations of the flesh by which he had always before been sorely tried. St. Gaetano da Tienne came here twice, for the express purpose of placing his new order under the protection of our Holy Mother. St. Francis Caracciolo spent two nights in this sanctuary, and received the assurance both of his companion's glory and of his own approaching death. St. Peter of Alcantara could never even speak of the Holy House without experiencing transports of unutterable sweetness. St. Joseph of Cupertino saw in a vision angels ascending and descending over it, with their hands loaded with gifts. B. Alessandro Sauli, the apostle of Corsica, St. Camillus of Lellis, St. Joseph Calasanctius, all testify to gifts and graces received from this heavenly fountain. It was a favourite devotion of St. Charles Borromeo frequently to visit it. St. Stanislaus Kostka visited it on his flight from Poland to Rome, and when praying there, first began to experience those heavenly flames with which his heart was afterwards consumed. St. Aloysius was bound by his mother's vow before he was born to visit this sanctuary, and when he discharged it, he spent well nigh a whole day upon his knees in the Santa Casa, receiving such ineffable consolations from God and Our Lady, that he used to melt into tears at the very recollection of them. M. Olier, the founder of the seminary of St. Sulpice, was finally converted to God in this sanctuary. St. Francis of Sales went on foot from Rome to Loreto, and no sooner had he entered the Holy House, than his biographer tells us, he was surprised by a flood of devout affections, and frequently kissed the walls which had been consecrated by the presence of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary. He confessed and communicated there, and then, dissolving in loving sighs, he began to cry out, 'These, then, are thy tabernacles, O beautiful spouse of the eternal King! Here then, O Divine Lover, Thou wert accustomed to remain "looking through the lattices." Here Thou didst feed amidst lilies. Here Thou didst become my Brother.' He then renewed

the vow of virginity which he had previously made in Paris.

But perhaps the greatest love and devotion to the sanctuary of Loreto was paid by the Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre. Indeed, his journeys to the Holy House were so frequent, and his behaviour there was so edifying, that he was called the Saint of Loreto. We are told that from the first time of visiting it, he was so affected that he could not satiate himself with seeing it, venerating it, melting into tears, and with loving affection kissing again and again those holy walls, and inflaming his heart more strongly with love for the Holy Mother of God.*

Although therefore it is quite true that a belief in the identity of the Holy House of Loreto with that in which the Incarnation was accomplished, and in its miraculous translation from Galilee to Italy, is no article of the faith, and a man may deny it, if he will, without thereby becoming a heretic, nevertheless it would be well for anyone who is tempted to do so to realise what he is doing. 'He is assuming that he is more intelligent than the great body of the faithful, who for centuries have venerated this sanctuary and have regarded its history as true. He is assuming that he is more sagacious than the saints, wiser than the supreme pontiffs, who have rendered such magnificent testimonies to the truth of its history, and more prudent than the Sacred Congregation of Rites, who have approved the Office of the translation.' Perhaps also it would be well for them to weigh the full significance of the following remarks, written by a very bitter enemy when examining this very subject:—'There are individuals in the Roman Church who look upon certain parts of their system as matters in which they are free to please themselves; but, whether in consequence or not, they are certainly none of the holiest. . . . We have discovered that belief and disbelief in the story of the Holy House amongst Roman Catholics go hand in hand respectively with ardent piety and indifference.'† In other words, a man cannot throw off the spirit of dutifulness and submission to authority from a profound

* F. Hutchison, pp. 51–55.

† Christian Remembrancer, No. lxxxiv. N. S.

conviction of his own superior knowledge, without suffering spiritual loss—a phenomenon which is hardly so strange as to have called for the elaborate investigation into its causes, which the writer referred to has attempted. And yet once more, it may be truly said that the man who rejects the Church's tradition, and resolves within himself that the Holy House is nothing more than any other house, turns a deaf ear to the voice of God Himself, who has spoken here by means of signs and wonders during more than five hundred years. The miracles which He has wrought at this place, says Canisius,* are so many, that they cannot possibly be numbered; so open and notorious, that none but the most shameless can dare to deny them; of so extraordinary and stupendous a character, that not even the most practised orator could adequately describe and illustrate them. From far and near men crowd to this sanctuary, men of all ranks and conditions of life, making or paying their vows to the Blessed Virgin, each according to his several necessities: all are animated by the same motive, and aim at one only end, to show forth their devotion or their gratitude to the Mother of God. Some come to give her thanks because they feel that to her, after God, they owe their deliverance from grievous diseases, or from dreadful perils by land, by fire, or by water; that from her, under God, they have received unlooked-for relief in the depths of their distress, when their affairs seemed altogether desperate; by her they are conscious that they have been tenderly watched and guarded both at home and abroad, amongst friends and amongst enemies, from dangers which they had foreseen, as well as from others which they knew not of. Others again come, because they have very near at heart the success of some favourite plan, or because they propose to change their state of life, or because they are weighed down by some heavy affliction, or because they apprehend some evil; and the innumerable offerings that are made, the votive tablets that are suspended, sufficiently attest the fact that their prayers are heard. We have already seen Pope Paul II. publicly acknowledging the favour which he

* De M. V. lib. v. c. 25.

had himself received here whilst yet he was a Cardinal, instantaneous deliverance from a fever under which he was suffering and of which Pope Pius II. had just now died ; Innocent XII. and Benedict XIV., in like manner, appealing to continual miracles as one of the most convincing evidences of the special sacredness of the place ; and elsewhere* the latter of these pontiffs expressly declares that the miracles wrought here were so frequent and notorious, that it would be superfluous to speak of them.

Our limits will not allow us to specify instances of miraculous cures, deliverance from demoniacal possession, and the like, with which the histories of Loreto abound ; but we cannot conclude without briefly noticing miracles of another kind, yet more wonderful and equally numerous. Everybody who has had the happiness of visiting Loreto bears testimony to the devotional effect of the sanctuary. Moreover it was observed by its old historians—and the observation has been commonly repeated by modern writers, as being still conformable with the truth—that there are few persons so utterly hardened in sin but that on entering this holy place they are conscious to themselves of a certain supernatural power touching and softening their hearts and moving them to repentance. Nothing is more common, says Canisius, than for strangers who come to this sanctuary with their souls dead in sin, stained with the blackest crimes perhaps during a period of many years, to awake to a consciousness of their guilt, to go and show themselves to the priest, to lay bare their miserable leprous condition to those experienced spiritual physicians whom the charity of the Church has provided here in such abundance for those who need them, and to receive at their hands the healing balm of penance. Nothing is more common than to see here persons who but a short time ago were far removed from every thing that is good, suddenly transformed into children of God ; so that from heretics they become Christians ; from criminals, honest men ; from wolves, sheep. Those who but lately were living in open enmity with God and with their neighbour, come here and bury every

* In Fest. Translat. Dom. Lauret.

feeling of envy, hatred, anger, and all uncharitableness; they are reconciled to their brethren, not unfrequently doing even public penance for their sins; they discharge their debts, forgive those who are in debt to them, restore any thing they may have unjustly acquired, and in a word fulfil the whole law of charity: and he concludes by observing, that there is not a church in all France, Germany, or Poland, in which there is such frequent administration of the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist as there is in this sanctuary.

The reader should bear in mind that this is the testimony of one who by his missionary labours in those parts of Europe was singularly qualified to speak with accuracy. It is to be regretted that he should not have recorded the exact number during some one year; but the only detail of information upon this point that is within my reach is later than the days of Canisius, viz. that 73,000 approached the sacraments there in the month of September 1780. This, however, would give less than a million for the whole year; whereas the number of communions made at the shrine of St. John Nepomuch in Prague, in the years 1723 and 1724, exceeded two millions in each year; and on an average of those and the three following years, it amounted to about a million and a half yearly.* I only mention this in the absence of more direct information, by way of helping the reader to form some more definite idea upon the subject than he might otherwise be able to do; helping him to translate Canisius' words into figures, that so he may be the better able to appreciate their significance.

Surely, then, we need not hesitate to conclude with the same distinguished writer, that if truth and holiness and religion are dear to us, we cannot but recognise and be thankful for the presence of the finger of God, yea rather of the strength of his right hand, in thus honouring, to the consolation of the whole Church, the *cultus* of Mary in this Sanctuary of Loreto. Heretics may mock and laugh it to scorn; but a tree which has borne so many and such excellent fruits of Christian piety

* Vita di S. Giov. Nepom. Galuzzi, p. 90.

can only itself be good; a tree which has taken such deep root, which has thrown out such high and spreading branches, which has stood through so many generations, can only have been planted by God.*

* Those who desire to know more of the early history of this Sanctuary, or have been perplexed by Dean Stanley's objections against it, should study Father Hutchison's Lectures (London, Dillon), illustrated by very important maps and plans. Every one of the Dean's arguments is there met and refuted. On the disingenuous way in which the Dean has alluded to this refutation in a later edition of his own work, see a very fair and moderate criticism in the *Month* of February 1867, pp. 178-183. We have not entered upon this branch of the subject ourselves, because, never having visited the Holy Land, we could only have reproduced the learned Oratorian's plans, measurements, and arguments, which are easily within everybody's reach.

I will here add, however, an important testimony which should have found its place in p. 73-77. The Count de Vogüé, whose work on *les Églises de la Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1860), is spoken of by Comm. G. B. De Rossi as 'a perfect model of sound criticism, exquisite learning, and sagacious archæological restoration of monuments,' says of Nazareth (p. 348), 'The principal church here is that of the Annunciation, built on the traditional site of the B. Virgin's house. . . . The house has disappeared, the cave at the back of it remains. After peace was given to the Church, it was transformed into a church; . . . the antique character of these constructions cannot be doubted; *it most unquestionably carries back to the fourth century* the tradition which assigns this as the place of the Annunciation.' He then, according to his usual practice, quotes in succession the ancient witnesses to the tradition, the earliest of whom, Antonius of Piacenza, wrote in the sixth century, before the Persian invasion of the Holy Land. Antonius speaks of the *admirandam basilicam magnam* in this place. Count de Vogüé adds that this church seems to have escaped destruction during the wars of the first Crusade; for immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, although the village of Nazareth was entirely overthrown (*bouleversé*), the church of the Annunciation still excited the admiration of Sæwulf (A.D. 1102).

CHAPTER II.

NAPLES.

1.—*Madonna del Carmine.*

IT would be unpardonable in any one who had undertaken to give an account, however brief, of the Italian sanctuaries of the Madonna, not to make special mention of the people of the kingdom of Naples. Even though none of their sanctuaries, when taken alone, were of sufficient celebrity to demand distinct notice in a calendar so short as ours, still there is something so striking, not only in the degree, but yet more in the character, of their devotion towards our Blessed Lady, that it ought not on any account to be omitted. 'Bring back with you some of the Neapolitan faith,' said the late Pope, on taking leave of an ecclesiastic in Rome, who was going to pay a visit to this kingdom. And certainly it is—or at least it *was*, some twenty years ago—quite impossible to reside there for any length of time, and to study the character of the people at all carefully, without acknowledging the justice of the comparison which such a speech implied. What the Apostle testified concerning the Romans, might then be applied literally to the Neapolitans also, that 'their faith is spoken of in the whole world.'

It is not only that a few outward circumstances of devotion, common in the early Church, but now generally abandoned, still linger among the faithful in these parts, though even these cannot fail to arrest the attention of the student of Christian antiquity; but much more, the remarkable manner in which this faith seems present to their minds at all times, and even in the most trifling matters, as an inseparable part of themselves. Thus, you cannot visit any of the churches frequented by the poor of Naples, without witnessing again and

again the hands outstretched in the form of a cross, according to the ancient attitude of Christian prayer, as they kneel in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament; and still more commonly, the people bowing their heads to the ground and kissing the pavement of the church as they enter it, or touching the pavement with their hands and then kissing them exactly according to the double method described by St. Chrysostom as being in common use amongst the Christians of his own days.* But outward details like these, interesting as they are in themselves, sink into insignificance when compared with such tokens of lively faith as are exhibited in the following anecdotes, whose accuracy may be relied upon. A French priest, after regaling himself with fresh figs in the garden of some Neapolitan peasant, asked for a drop of water and a towel to wash his hands; but when he proceeded for this purpose to make use of the first cloth he could meet with, the good woman of the house prevented him, saying that it was not worthy of hands which handled day after day the sacred Body and Blood of Christ, and insisted upon bringing him the finest linen which her stores could supply. A Maltese priest of our acquaintance, having some disagreement with a *vetturino* whom he had been employing as to the value of his services, the *vetturino* grew angry, and at length seemed disposed to strike him. Upon this the porter of the hotel called out to him to take care what he was about, for that the gentleman was a priest (our friend was travelling in a secular dress). Immediately the poor man was upon his knees, begging pardon for all he had said, and refusing to receive even what had been previously offered him.

But to come closer to our immediate subject, devotion to the Madonna; here, too, we will not dwell upon merely outward circumstances, such as abstaining from wine on all Saturdays in her honour—an act of devotion which we read of as long ago as in the beginning of the eleventh century, and which was publicly confirmed by a law in one of the numerous Councils held in Rome during the pontificate of St. Gregory VII.; or again, the practice so common in Neapolitan families of the middle or even the lower class, of adopting a foundling

* Hom. xxx. in Ep. 2 ad Cor.

in the place of any child of their own who may have died, who is henceforth treated in all respects as one of the family, and is called *figlio della Madonna*. We pass over these and other similar features of Neapolitan devotion, sufficiently curious and attractive to the eye of a stranger, that we may speak of their habitual feelings and tone of thought with reference to the Blessed Virgin, as exhibited in their mode of addressing her. These we can only liken to the feelings of children towards the most affectionate and indulgent of mothers; any other comparison would be infinitely too feeble to express the simplicity, the freedom, the familiarity, and the confidence, which characterise their whole language towards her; and even this falls short of the reality, as much as the power and the love of an earthly parent must needs be inferior to that of this heavenly one.

They come and pour forth their whole souls before some picture or image of the Madonna, entering into all their hopes and fears, doubts and anxieties, every detail of their domestic circumstances, quite as naturally as a child confides its little troubles or desires to one of whose sympathy and assistance it has reason to be assured. At one time you may see a poor woman who is going on a journey, or removing from her usual place of residence, come to take leave of her favourite Madonna, and talk to her, and lament over the separation, and in every respect converse with her as though she were her nearest and dearest friend from whom she was about to part: or you may see another rush hastily into a church, evidently under the pressure of some sudden trial, throw herself at the feet of the Madonna, and cover them with kisses; then, amid the most convulsive sobs, and with any thing but the silent prayer of Anna, in which 'only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all,' tell her the whole history of what has happened, and implore her interference; gradually her agitation subsides; she has communicated her troubles to one who will be sure to help her, and, strengthened by this consolation, she rises from her knees with a calm and cheerful countenance, to go forth and bear them patiently. Yet she can scarcely make up her mind to leave the sanctuary of her peace. As she withdraws with slow and unwilling steps, ever

and anon she turns her head to waft another kiss to the Madonna; and you may hear such parting exclamations as these bursting from her lips: '*Addio, mamma mia*; I have told you everything; I am going away now, and I reckon upon your help: you understand me: I know you'll not disappoint me; *addio, mamma mia, addio.*'

And lest any of my readers should think that this childlike simplicity is confined to the lower and more uneducated classes, I cannot resist the temptation of presenting them with one or two extracts from a little book of devotions, published about thirty years ago by a distinguished advocate, at that time one of the judges in Naples. This is a specimen of the kind of address which he uses towards the Madonna. 'Listen to me, my mother; you *must* grant me what I have asked; for if you refuse, what will people say of you? either that you could not, or that you would not, help me. That you *could* not, nobody will believe, for they know you too well for that; and then, that you *would* not—I protest I would rather be told that you had not the power than that you had not the will; for what! shall it be said that my own mother, the mother of mercy, grace, and kindness, had not the will to relieve the necessity of one of her children? Oh, what then will become of her reputation? Think of this, my mother, and extricate yourself from the dilemma if you can.' And again: 'You think, perhaps, my mother, that you have given me a great deal already. I do not deny it; but you owe me still more than you have given me. Every one knows that your riches are inexhaustible; that you are the Queen of heaven and earth, the dispenser of grace and the gifts of God. But then consider, I pray of you, that those riches were given you, not for yourself alone, but for your children; for me, the last and most unworthy of them all! Was it not to redeem us that the Son of God became man, and chose you for his Mother? Behold, then, all that you have is ours; it was given you for us; it belongs to us. Now you cannot deny that all that you have yet given me is as nothing compared with what you possess. You are therefore my debtor, and you owe me much. Is it not so? What answer have you to make to this?'

Such being the character of the Neapolitan devotion to the Queen of Heaven, it is not to be wondered at that her shrines and sanctuaries should be specially abundant throughout the whole kingdom; still this does not render our task the easier, when we are called upon to select the history of one or two in particular, as most worthy of publication. It is not merely, or even principally, the *embarras de richesses* which constitutes our difficulty, but much more the general want of that critical accuracy, which is so desirable a feature in histories of this kind intended for the perusal of Englishmen, and so entirely foreign from most Neapolitan authors. This defect may perhaps in some measure be owing to that *insigne ac perenne miraculum*, as Baronius speaks, whereof their city has been for so many centuries the privileged witness, and which still continues for every one who wills to 'come and see,' the periodical liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. The fact, that in this particular instance the facility of ocular demonstration may be supposed to supersede, in some sort, the necessity of such critical exactness in narration, may have given them a general carelessness in this matter; or it may be that they write only for their own countrymen, with whose disposition they are acquainted, and have no desire to accommodate themselves to, or really have no idea of the existence of, the cold and cautious temper which characterises the inhabitants of more northern climes. However, be the cause what it may, the fact, I think, cannot be doubted, that very few histories of the kind we are at present concerned with, written by Neapolitan authors, would bear translation and publication in our own language. I am not saying that they have mistaken for miracles events which might easily be accounted for by the ordinary laws of nature (though this, again, is a danger to which they may be exposed, and from the same causes), but I am speaking only of the way in which they have recorded histories, whose supernatural character there is not the slightest reason to call in question: they have not been careful to collect and arrange the evidence, or they have neglected to quote the authorities for what they say, or they have not distinguished between what is certain and what is doubtful: they have

confounded history with tradition, and tradition with conjecture, and so on.

I have selected, however, the histories of two sanctuaries, which, upon examination, appear to sin least in these particulars, or which have other more certain authority to rest upon, and which have a special claim upon the interest either of the writer or his readers.

The first place in order of importance, if not of antiquity also, must be given to the *Madonna del Carmine*, or, as it is more commonly called by the Neapolitans, in allusion to its dark colour, *Santa Maria della Bruna*. This picture, whose darkness, though it may have been increased by age, was probably not undesigned by the artist himself, was brought to Naples somewhere about the middle of the twelfth century by some of the religious from Mount Carmel, whose order began about that time gradually to forsake the East, preparatory to its complete migration and settlement in Europe, which took place about a hundred years later. It is this picture which has furnished the original for all those likenesses of the Madonna which are impressed upon the medals, scapulars, and other religious objects belonging to the Carmelite Order. I do not, of course, mean that they have retained a faithful copy of all the features of the original, but this is their proper standard, their prototype: the relative position of the Mother and Child is the same in all—the same idea pervades them—they are all intended to be copies of this *Santa Maria della Bruna*. The Carmelites then, about the middle of the twelfth century, had a small church and convent assigned to them without the walls of Naples, and over their high altar they placed this picture of the Madonna, where it seems from the very first to have attracted, in a singular degree, the devotion of the people, especially during the three weeks which intervene between the Feasts of the Assumption and of the Nativity of our Blessed Lady. In the year 1269 the people of Naples witnessed the tragical execution of their young king Conradin, and the bitter grief and disappointment of his mother, the Empress Margaret, who arrived in the harbour just too late to save his life, by paying the ransom which had been already

agreed upon with Charles of Anjou. The disconsolate mother, thus frustrated in the purpose for which she had designed the large treasures which she brought with her, was still anxious to spend them in some way or other upon her son. She obtained leave to remove his body from the place in which it had been interred (a small chapel raised on the spot where he had been beheaded), and to place it in this church of the Carmelites, which she determined to rebuild on a scale of magnificence worthy of a royal mausoleum. When this had been done, the picture of the Madonna, which had hitherto adorned the high altar, was considered to be too small for so prominent a position, and was made to give way, therefore, to a much larger picture of the Assumption, being itself removed to one of the side chapels belonging to a Neapolitan family of the name of Grignetti. Here it fell into comparative neglect, the more modern picture having succeeded to its place, not only in the church, but also, in some sort, in the affections of the people. Still some lingering devotion must have been entertained towards it, or it would scarcely have been asked for on the occasion which we have now to relate, and which soon restored it to more than its pristine celebrity.

In the year of jubilee, A.D. 1500 (that is, in the eighth jubilee, reckoning from that of Boniface VIII. in 1300, from which period alone their history is accurately known), many devout Neapolitans determined to make the pilgrimage to Rome, that they too might share in all the spiritual treasures which are at such seasons so liberally dispensed in the Holy City. A confraternity of tanners attached to the church of St. Catherine seem to have been those who took the lead in this good work; nevertheless, any others who chose were at liberty to avail themselves of the opportunity, and to accompany them. A large crucifix fit to be borne at the head of such a procession, was obtained from their own church; but they were anxious to put themselves also under the special guardianship of our Blessed Lady, and for this purpose they sought some image or picture of her which they might carry with them. At length they succeeded in persuading the Carmelite fathers to lend them this picture of Santa Maria della Bruna; and thus provided, the pilgrims set forth on their

journey early on the morning of the 5th of April, chanting the litanies and psalms, and other devout hymns and prayers appropriate to the occasion. At a short distance from the church from which they started, there lay by the roadside a poor cripple, by name Thomas Saccone, whose whole body was deformed and his legs perfectly useless,—just such a one as we may imagine him to have been who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, when Peter and John went up at the ninth hour of prayer; like him, too, he was known to all the people; so that the miracle which was presently wrought in him was ‘manifest, and could not be denied.’ This man, as he saw the procession advancing, was seized with an earnest desire to accompany it, and the burden of his infirmities seemed more sad and oppressive to him than ever it had done before, because he was thereby rendered incapable of fulfilling his desire. As his thoughts dwelt upon the subject, the intensity of his desire increased, and presently there mingled with it a ray of hope, suggesting the possibility that he might obtain from the Queen of Heaven the grace of deliverance from all his evils, if he would promise to consecrate the first use of his recovered limbs to undertaking this pilgrimage to Rome. The picture of the Madonna was already passing him, when the poor beggar poured forth one earnest cry for help, and vowed to join the procession if only he were healed. Immediately he felt a sudden glow of heat penetrating his whole frame; new vigour seemed to infuse itself into all his limbs; ‘forthwith his feet and soles received strength, and leaping up, he stood and walked, and went with them.’

The fame of so signal a miracle, happening too under circumstances of such extreme publicity, could not fail to spread far and wide; so that as the procession advanced from one village to another on its journey to the Eternal City, they found the inhabitants already apprised of what had taken place, and ‘bringing forth the sick into the streets, and laying them on beds and couches,’ that when this picture of the most powerful and at the same time the most compassionate of mothers should come, ‘her shadow at the least might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities.’ This importunity of the people necessarily

impeded their progress, so that they did not arrive in Rome until the ninth day, that is, the 13th instant. Here, too, the fame of the miraculous cure of the cripple in Naples, and of many others which had happened subsequently upon the road, had preceded the arrival of the pilgrims; the report had even reached the ears of the Pope, so that he ordered inquiries to be made as to its trustworthiness and authenticity. The result was such as to induce him to go himself on the following day, accompanied by all the Cardinals, to pay his devotions to the picture in the basilica of St. Peter's: there, having knelt and prayed before it, and incensed it, he gave benediction with it to the crowds of people, who, like himself, had come together to visit it. At the same time also, he granted certain indulgences to those who should recite their prayers before it. The picture was then borne about by the pilgrims to all the other basilicas and holy places which they visited; and it was everywhere received with the warmest devotion. After five days, on the morning of the 18th instant, they set out to return to their home. The same crowds came forth everywhere to greet them; and here and there the same wonderful blessings were dispensed; but the greatest wonder of all, and that to which I do not remember anywhere to have met with an exact parallel, awaited their return to Naples itself.

The Carmelites and others went out to Aversa, a distance of eight or nine miles, to meet and welcome home this precious treasure, of whose value they had been so little conscious before they parted with it; and its entrance into the city was celebrated by the people with every demonstration of public rejoicing, like that of a king returning in triumph after some famous victory. The picture was restored to its original position over the high altar, and the people flocked thither in multitudes to seek for help under all their various trials and necessities. Frederic II., however, of Arragon, at that time king of Naples, not content with these evidences of the public faith and devotion towards this Madonna, conceived an idea so bold as almost to savour of presumption, had not the result seemed to prove that it sprang out of a simple undoubting faith, certainly that it was accepted and rewarded by God. He ordered that all the sick and infirm, the blind and the

deaf, the lame and the withered, everybody, in a word, throughout the whole of his kingdom, who was labouring under any bodily infirmity, yet was not incapable of removal, should be brought together to the metropolis, and there placed in a hospital which he had prepared for the purpose near to this church. Each person was to bring with him a properly attested certificate of his name and age, the place of his birth and residence, the exact nature of his malady, the length of time during which he had been afflicted by it, and every other detail which could be required for settling beyond dispute the authenticity of each particular case. When all these persons had been collected (and a most sad spectacle of suffering humanity they must have formed), he caused them to be arranged on an appointed day on benches in that part of the area of the church which was nearest to the altar; to the rest of the church the public were freely admitted, excepting only certain reserved seats or galleries, where the king himself and all the royal family, together with the principal grandees of the kingdom, were assembled to be witnesses of what might happen. One of the royal secretaries first read aloud the names of all the infirm who were present, and a brief statement of their infirmities. When this was over, High Mass was begun, the choir of the royal chapel assisting; and during the celebration of Mass (probably, if we may judge from the modern practice in these matters, just at the 'Gloria in excelsis') the picture was unveiled. Those who have been in the habit of frequenting any church in Naples or its neighbourhood, where some statue or picture, the object of special devotion, is thus uncovered only during some portion of a Mass can easily imagine what fervent cries of supplication burst forth from the lips of these unhappy sufferers just at the moment when the curtain was withdrawn; but who can paint the extravagance of their shouts and gestures, their wild exclamations of joy and thankfulness, when at the same moment a ray of light was seen to descend from heaven, to shine brightly upon the face of the Madonna, and thence to reflect its brilliance upon the assembled people, who were all immediately healed?

The sacred historian, when he records the healing of the

sick and the casting out of evil spirits by handkerchiefs and aprons brought from the body of St. Paul, prefaces the narration with these words, 'God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles.' And certainly the present miracle deserves to be classed among those which are 'more than common,' its peculiarity consisting, of course, in the extraordinary number of persons who were made the subjects of it. We have already said that it is no part of our purpose to anticipate and to answer all the objections which may be raised against any of these narratives; nevertheless, it may be worth while to observe, with reference to this particular circumstance, that in more than one Scripture narrative there is the same indefinite statement of the numbers, who, having manifested their faith by some outward act of their own, or done for them by their friends, were similarly rewarded by the instantaneous cure of their evils. When our Lord was in the country of Genesar, and 'the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased, and then besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment. *And as many as touched were made whole.*' And again, when St. Peter was in Jerusalem, after the miraculous healing of the lame man which has been already spoken of, 'there came together a multitude out of the neighbouring cities, bringing sick persons and such as were troubled with unclean spirits, *who were all healed.*'*

* St. Matt. xiv. 36; Acts v. 16.

2.— *Santa Maria della Grotta, in the Diocese of La Cava.*

I PASS by Santa Maria di Costantinopoli, di Piedegrotta, della Sanità, della Vita, and others within the city of Naples, each of which has its own history, worthy of being known, that I may find room to speak of a sanctuary more modern than any of these, the *Madonna della Grotta*, as it is called in its own immediate neighbourhood, or *Santa Maria Avvocata de' Peccatori*, as it is more fully described by those who have written of it in books.

Catholic travellers, who, after visiting the shrine of St. Alphonso at Pagani, and the ancient Baptistery of St. Mary Major's at Nocera, go on to the shrines of St. Matthew and St. Gregory VII. at Salerno, not unfrequently make a little *détour* from the high road, as soon as they have passed La Cava, that they may visit the famous Benedictine monastery of La Trinità. The road by which the ascent to this monastery is generally made passes a little to the right of the sanctuary of which we are speaking, and hides from the unconscious traveller the very beautiful scenery which is so near him; but if he turned aside to the left, soon after having passed the village of San Cesareo, two minutes' walk would suffice to bring him to the edge of a long, deep, narrow, and precipitous ravine, clothed with wood down to the brink of the stream which rushes along the bottom, and crowned on either side with a chapel of the Madonna. At present there is a very safe and commodious path, leading to the mill which is a little farther up the valley, and a bridge whereby we may cross from one side to the other. But 200 years ago, at which time our history begins, this path was neither safe nor convenient; it had a very bad name, and was said to be infested by evil spirits. One day, in the year 1654, as a certain Don Federigo, a priest of La Cava, was going along by this way to San Pietro a Dragonea, one of the hamlets

belonging to the parish of San Cesareo, he had (or imagined he had, for it makes no difference to our story) an encounter with some of these spirits, just at the mouth of one of those grottoes, or natural caverns in the rock, which are so frequent in that neighbourhood, and from whence La Cava itself is supposed to have derived its name. On his return home, this good priest determined to place so dangerous a cavern under the immediate protection of the Madonna; but not having sufficient means to procure a statue or painting for this purpose, he was obliged to content himself with fastening to the rock a little print, which he happened to have, representing the Blessed Virgin, with the Dove and the Cherubim over her head, holding the child Jesus in her arms, and having St. Paul, the first hermit, on her right hand, and St. Onofrius on her left. The title of this picture was the Advocate of Sinners; and as the print remained there, uninjured by time and by the damp, during a period of forty-eight years, the cave gradually lost its old name of the *Grotta degli Sportigliani* (or, of the bats), and received in its stead that of the *Avvocatella*.

Doubtless it had been saluted with many an Ave by the devotion of the passers-by during this half century; and at length, in the year 1702, Fra Angiolo Maria di Majuri, a lay brother of one of the Franciscan convents in La Cava, remarkable for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, caused a copy of the engraving to be executed in fresco, in a little niche which he had prepared for it in the rock. At the same time he exhorted the neighbours to burn a lamp before it, and frequently repeated, in the presence of the parish priests and others, that that grotto, which had once been the haunt of infernal spirits, would ere long become the house of God, and that the Mother of God would dispense from thence the treasures of her power and goodness with a most liberal hand. Of course the first part of this prophecy (so to call it) had a natural tendency to bring about its own fulfilment. One of the priests, who had often listened to Fra Angiolo's confident assurances on this subject, caused an altar to be raised before the painting, a lamp to be kept burning, and the litanies and other devotional exercises to be frequently repeated there.

It happened on Saturday, the 19th of May, in the following year, that as a poor man, named Antonio Casaburi, accompanied by his son, a boy of six years old, was driving along this path a donkey laden with corn, the animal went too near the edge of the precipice and rolled over, carrying the boy along with him. The depth of the rock in this place was about 120 feet, so that the poor father expected nothing else than to see his son dashed to pieces at the bottom; nevertheless, with the natural instinct of a Catholic, he called loudly upon Santa Maria dell' Avvocata whose shrine was at his side, to assist him in this hour of danger; and when, in company with two or three others who had been witnesses of the accident, or whom he had called from the mill to assist him, he arrived at the spot, he found the animal quietly grazing, the boy busily collecting the scattered grain, and both perfectly uninjured.

The fame of this miracle, which was attested by three competent witnesses, besides the father and the child themselves, drew such multitudes of persons to the grotto, that the crowd passing to and fro in so narrow a place became quite dangerous, and leave was obtained from the proper ecclesiastical authorities to erect a spacious chapel there. The building was carried on briskly, through the liberal almsgiving of those who came to ask for *grazie* here, and but few of whom were 'sent empty away;' but in the meanwhile a new bishop had been appointed to the see of La Cava, who determined to take all the precautions enjoined by the Council of Trent, and to inform himself, by means of a congregation of theologians, and by the juridical examination of witnesses, of the exact truth of the marvellous reports which were in circulation. The painting was boarded up, and all access to it forbidden, whilst this examination was pending; but it soon appeared that the proofs were too distinct and too numerous to admit of doubt; and after fifteen days the people were once more gladdened with the sight of their *Avvocata*, and the episcopal sanction was formally renewed to the undertaking in hand. On the 7th September, 1704, the first mass was celebrated in the new church by one of the parish priests, a man whose span of life had already exceeded 'the threescore years and ten,'

and who, having himself received a signal *grazia* at the hands of this *Advocate*, consecrated the last years of his life to celebrating her glories, and, by order of the bishop, published an account of them.

Every year, as the principal *festa*, which is in the month of May, comes round, numbers crowd to visit the sanctuary, not only from Nocera and Salerno, but also from Castellamare, Sorrento, and even Naples itself; and at all times of the year, simple peasants from the adjoining villages, groups of women, members of the same family, or neighbours in the same village, suffering under some common affliction, may be seen wending their way through the chestnut-groves of La Cava, with bare feet and dishevelled hair, alternately telling their beads and reciting their litanies until they reach this Church of the Grotta; here they kneel for awhile to repeat their devotions in the presence of the picture itself, and to make some little offering of flowers, or oil, or candles, after which they return to their homes, bearing with them some portion of the oil from the lamp that has been burning before the shrine, nothing doubting that, if it be God's will, the sick will receive the same benefits from the application of this oil as, we know from the testimony of St. Chrysostom,* the Christians of his days often experienced from the same remedy. It is in memory of such a humble pilgrimage, undertaken by kind-hearted villagers for the sick child of strangers making their summer residence amongst them in 1849, that this brief notice of their favourite shrine is here inserted.

* Hom. 32 (al. 33) in St. Matt.

CHAPTER III.

SWITZERLAND.

Einsiedlen, or Our Lady of the Hermits.

THIS celebrated sanctuary stands among rocky mountains in the canton of Schwitz, in the midst of what, in the ninth century of the Christian era, was a savage wilderness. Here, about the year 840, a Benedictine monk named Meinrad, who had formerly filled the office of scholasticus in one of the abbeys dependent on that of Reichenau, took refuge from the applause of his own scholars, and the veneration of those who regarded him as a saint. His first retreat had been a little hut erected on Mt. Etzel near Altendorf, on a spot still marked by a chapel where the pilgrims to Einsiedlen are accustomed to make the first station. But the world found him out here, and men of all countries resorted in such crowds to the cell of the poor anchorite, that to escape their importunities he one day took his image of the Blessed Virgin, his Missal, the rule of St. Benedict, and the works of Cassian, and with these for his sole companions he plunged into the dense Helvetian forest to find out some place where he might more effectually conceal himself from the world.

He found it at Einsiedlen where he built himself a cell and in an adjoining chapel* he deposited the image before which he had received many miraculous favours. In this retreat he sustained many of those assaults with which the enemy of souls so often persecuted the ancient solitaries. Frightful tempests raged in the desolate wilderness, and the pines of the old forest were torn up by the mountain winds, and sometimes assumed gigantic proportions, and seemed as if endowed

* This chapel was built for him by Hildegard, daughter of the emperor Louis, and abbess of a convent of nuns at Zürich.

with life. Sometimes the whole forest seemed in flames around his cell; but in the midst of these and yet more horrible trials Meinrad remained unmoved, and overcame every attack with the unfailing weapon of prayer. One of his brother monks of Reichenau who had discovered his retreat, and who was occasionally permitted to visit him, drew near his cell one night and perceived a brilliant light proceeding from the little chapel. Looking in he saw Meinrad kneeling on the altar step reciting the night office, whilst a young child surrounded by brilliant rays supported his book, and recited with him the alternate verses. The monk dared not intrude, but returning to his monastery made known to the brethren that Meinrad's solitary cell was visited by angels.

Twenty-six years were thus spent by the holy hermit in the mingled exercise of contemplation and apostolic labour. The rustics of the neighbourhood sought him out and profited by his instructions, and even the wild creatures of the surrounding forest forgot their savage nature and resorted to his cell. Two crows in particular came to him every day to be fed from his hand, and returned his kindness to them by a fidelity which history has not failed to commemorate.

At last, however, the idea suggested itself to two miscreants named Richard and Peter, that hidden treasures were concealed in Meinrad's poor hermitage, and they accordingly conceived the plan of assassinating him. They made their way to his cell, and as they passed through the forest, the birds raised a frightful clamour as though to warn their benefactor of the approach of danger. But Meinrad had already received warning of his approaching fate from a higher source, and addressing his murderers, he said to them, 'I well know wherefore you are come hither, but you shall not slay me till you have received my blessing and pardon. When I am dead light these two candles and place one at the head and the other at the foot of my couch, and then fly quickly lest you be discovered by those who come hither to visit me.' Unsoftened by these words the ruffians fell on him and dashed out his brains, and as he breathed his last an odour of inexpressible fragrance diffused itself through the cell. Having searched everywhere, and found no treasure, they were about in their

haste to leave the spot without obeying the saint's last injunction, when, says the legend, they beheld the candles lit of themselves. Filled with terror at this marvel they took to flight, but as they hastened through the forest, their hands and clothes dyed with the blood of their victim, the two crows pursued them, pecking at them, and flapping them with their wings. The body was discovered in the course of the day, by a poor carpenter, who had been in the habit of often visiting Meinrad in his cell, and the news soon spread that the saint had been murdered, and that two men supposed to be the assassins had been seen hurrying on the road to Zürich. The crowd which the news had assembled together, set out in that direction, and arriving at Zürich, were directed to the house where the murderers had taken refuge, by beholding the two crows furiously pecking at the windows of an inn, where they obstinately remained in spite of every effort of the servant-girl to drive them away. The carpenter recognised the birds, and the murderers being seized confessed their crime and were broken on the wheel. At the moment of execution, it is said that the crows appeared hovering over the scaffold, and the memory of these events is still preserved in Zürich, where one of the inns bears the sign of the Two Faithful Crows.*

The death of Meinrad took place in the year 863. His body was at first taken to Reichenau, where it remained until the year 1039, but in the meantime his little hermitage, the chapel in which he had been used to pray, and the holy image of Our Lady deposited there by his hands, were devoutly visited by vast numbers of pilgrims, and became the scenes of stupendous prodigies. Forty years passed without anything being done to preserve the hermitage itself from falling into ruins; but in 903, Benno, a canon of Strasburg, having made a pilgrimage thither, was so touched by devotion that he

* There seems no reason for doubting the truth of this legend about the crows, which need not necessarily be regarded as in any way miraculous. The story has been reproduced in sculpture and illuminations in a great number of churches; the Abbey of Einsiedlen still bears two crows on its armorial shield, and to this day the custom prevails among the servants of the abbey, of every year catching a crow, which is taken great care of during the winter, and set at liberty again at the approach of spring.

resolved to bid the world farewell, and to found a community of hermits on the spot already consecrated by the life and death of a saint.

The cells of the new hermits, built only of wood and moss, were accordingly constructed round Meinrad's chapel, which from this time received the name of *Einsiedlen*. In 927 Benno was forced to accept the bishopric of Metz, where his courageous efforts to reform the vices of his people raised a tumult against him, in the course of which his enemies dragged him from his palace to the public square, where they inhumanly tore out his eyes, and then banished him from his see. The crime was punished as it deserved by the Emperor Henry I., but Benno gladly took the occasion of resigning his dignity and once more retiring to his beloved solitude, where thirteen years later, his body was laid to rest, at the foot of Our Lady's altar.

Among those whom he had trained in the path of perfection was Eberhard a Swabian noble, who conceived the design of converting the hermitage into an abbey, of which in 940 he became the first abbot. A magnificent church rose over the chapel of Our Lady, the rule of St. Benedict was introduced, and thus began the rich and famous abbey afterwards governed by a long line of princes of the Holy Roman Empire.*

It would take us far beyond our limits to follow the history of the abbey through succeeding centuries; but the legendary history of the consecration of its church is too famous to be passed over in silence. The ceremony was to have been performed by Conrad, Bishop of Constance, who arrived at Einsiedlen for that purpose on September 14, 948, accompanied by St. Ulric of Augsburg, and a crowd of nobles and ecclesiastics. The eve of the day fixed for the dedication was spent by the bishop and the other clergy in watching and prayer. Sud-

* The first abbot who enjoyed the rank of Prince of the Empire, conferred on him by the Emperor Otho the Great, was an Englishman by birth. Gregory, the third abbot in succession from St. Eberhard, is said to have been a son of King Edward the Elder; he was certainly of the Anglo-Saxon blood-royal, for the Empress Editha, first wife to Otho, was daughter to King Edward, and in the chronicle of Einsiedlen Gregory is spoken of as her *relative*.

denly as they prayed, they beheld the church illuminated with marvellous splendour, and filled with a heavenly throng, in the midst of which Our Lord Himself appeared standing at the altar, celebrating the sacred rite. Conrad who himself relates the story in his book entitled *De Secretis Secretorum*, informs us that the text of the *Sanctus* as chanted by the angels ran as follows: *Sanctus Deus in aula gloriosæ Virginis, miserere nobis. Benedictus Marice Filius, in æternum regnaturus qui venit, &c.*

When day broke the multitude assembled and waited long and impatiently for the Bishop to commence the ceremony. When at last he appeared he declared to them what he had witnessed during the night; nevertheless, at length he yielded to their persuasion that it was but a dream, and entering the church he prepared to begin the ceremony, when an unknown voice was heard repeating the words, '*Cessa, cessa, frater! capellus divinitus consecratus est!*'

We will only add that sixteen years later, Conrad and Ulric being at Rome, solemnly deposed to the truth of this narrative, which was published to the world in a bull of Pope Leo VIII. In this bull it was forbidden ever to reconsecrate the church, and large indulgences were granted to those who should devoutly and with contrite hearts perform the pilgrimage to so holy a spot.

In 1039 the Prince-Abbot Embricius succeeded in obtaining the translation of the relics of St. Meinrad from the Abbey of Reichenau, and the pilgrimage, which was already a very famous one, especially in Germany and Switzerland, thenceforward attracted yet larger numbers, and became so popular that not even the disastrous Revolution of the sixteenth century had power to interrupt it. Even the heretics themselves never entirely lost their veneration for Our Lady of Einsiedlen, and Scotti, at that time Apostolic Nuncio in Switzerland, affirms it as a well-known fact, that hundreds of those who professed the new opinions every year visited this sanctuary, irresistibly drawn thither by the sanctity of the place, and the force of long-established habits. The chief concourse takes place on the anniversary of the miraculous consecration of the church, namely the 14th of September, and during the ensuing

fortnight, when as many as 100,000 pilgrims have been known to assemble. The rocky mountain-road leading to the abbey is often dyed with the blood of those who piously ascend it barefoot; and on first coming in sight of the towers of this venerable abbey it is impossible not to be conscious of that peculiar devotion, or as one writer expresses it, ‘*of that sacred dread,*’ which is inspired on the near approach of holy ground. Standing nearly 3,000 feet above the level of the sea, and forming the central point where two valleys meet, the situation of Einsiedlen is picturesque in the extreme. A village containing more than 2,000 inhabitants has sprung up around the great abbey, which, in its present form, is not of very ancient date,* for it has been repeatedly burnt down and rebuilt, and the greater part of the present edifice was constructed in 1704. It is remarkable, however, that in each of the five fires* which reduced the rest of the buildings to ashes, the holy chapel which is enclosed within the great church escaped injury. On entering the church it immediately strikes your eye, standing in the very midst of the larger building, and contrasting by its sombre appearance with the magnificence that appears around it on every side. So greatly was this chapel revered that it was jealously preserved in its original form up to the year 1467, when, in consequence of its narrow escape a third time from being consumed, Burchard, Bishop of Constance, ordered that it should be vaulted with stone, and protected outside with stone columns and pilasters. In 1617 it was entirely cased in marble, by order of Marcus Sitticus, the celebrated Archbishop of Saltzburg, and succeeding prelates have yet further adorned it with statues and bas-reliefs. The interior of the chapel once blazed with riches. Precious marbles still cover the walls of the further extremity where the miraculous image, the rude and Gothic appearance of which attests its antiquity, is still preserved, having escaped destruction amid all the convulsions of the revolutionary period. The face of the altar on which it stands was once adorned with a silver bas-relief representing the miraculous dedication and sixteen large waxen tapers were kept constantly burning before it at the expense of the sixteen Catholic cantons of

* Those in 1028, 1214, 1465, 1509, and 1577.

Switzerland. Both altar frontal and candles have disappeared, but on the altar appears an exceedingly rich tabernacle enclosing the head of St. Meinrad, the only portion of his relics which has been preserved from the profanation of the revolutionary hordes. Five lamps presented by various European sovereigns, used also to burn continually before the image, but these too have been removed since the late troubles. Mass is said in the chapel continuously from four in the morning until ten, when the high Mass is celebrated in the choir; then follows another low Mass within the Holy Chapel, and from that time, writes a modern pilgrim, 'you hear nothing but the voice of the pilgrims incessantly repeating the rosary, as band by band successively enters the chapel.' This lasts until vespers, after which the monks every day visit the holy image singing the *Salve Regina* in procession. As soon as they have left the chapel it is once more besieged by pious crowds who may be seen praying there until nine o'clock, when the church is closed. Nothing can exceed the devotion exhibited by these pilgrims; you may see them in every attitude of prayer, some prostrate, others kneeling with their arms extended in the form of a cross; they are of all ranks and all nations, but perhaps the larger proportion are from the truly Catholic soil of the Tyrol.

We shall not attempt to trace the history of the pilgrimage, or to count up the illustrious names that appear on the list of those who have offered their devotion at this celebrated shrine. To do so would be to enumerate half the crowned heads, the canonised saints, and the Catholic men of learning of nine centuries. Among modern pilgrims one appears to have made no fewer than four pilgrimages to Einsiedlen; it was Queen Hortense Eugénie, mother to the present Emperor of France, who on three of these occasions accompanied his mother, being then a child. Among the votive offerings left by the Queen was a small *Hortensia* in diamonds. It will be more interesting to the reader if we say something of the manner in which the miraculous statue was preserved during the revolutionary crisis of 1798.

On the 30th of April in that year the French troops entered the canton of Schwitz, and without waiting for their nearer

approach the monks hastened to remove the image, which they succeeded in transporting to the neighbouring valley of Alp Thal on the very day that the French entered Einsiedlen. The curé of this place was required to give up the statue on pain of having a detachment of troops quartered in his village, but the brave curé, while negotiating with the commandant, caused the image to be secretly carried away to a *châlet* among the mountains, whence it was a little later transferred to a convent of nuns at Bludenz near Vorarlberg. Placidus Keller, an old servant of the convent, was trusted with the honourable but dangerous task of conveying it thither. Furnishing himself with a pedlar's pack, he covered the image with handkerchiefs and other small wares, and with this strapped on his back he boldly made his way through the very lines of his enemies, to whom he more than once had to display his merchandise, on which occasions, with the utmost nonchalance, he appeared absorbed only with anxiety to strike a profitable bargain. Once safe at Bludenz all necessity of secrecy was considered at an end, and the image being exposed in the public square before the convent, an immense demonstration of popular devotion took place, and whole villages came even from the Tyrol during a four days' solemnity that was celebrated by way of thanksgiving. In the October following it was judged prudent to remove the image into the Tyrol, and to prevent the possible danger of the inhabitants laying claim to the treasure on the ground of long possession, it was never allowed to remain for any length of time in one place, but was taken first to Imst, then to Hale, from thence to Drieste, and was finally brought back to Bludenz. During these journeys one of the monks of Einsiedlen, named Conrad Tanner, always accompanied it as its guardian.

In 1803, the terrible crisis having happily passed over, it was resolved to restore the holy image to its own sanctuary. It was secretly brought down the Rhine, conveyed through Switzerland, and deposited in the chapel of St. Meinrad on Mont Etzel. From thence it was conducted to Einsiedlen in a sort of triumphal procession, and replaced on the altar where it had reposed for so many centuries.

The five years that had intervened, if they had witnessed

the spoliation of its material treasures, had in no degree diminished the devotion with which the sanctuary of Einsiedlen was regarded by Catholic Switzerland. Not to speak of more than seventy parishes which annually send their processions thither, no fewer than 2,164,000 pilgrims are known to have visited this church between the years 1820 and 1834, and in 1836 alone their numbers amounted to 180,000. One pilgrim, who visited the Holy Chapel in 1840 in fulfilment of a vow, has described the throng assembled there on the great annual festival in September. The fifty-five inns, which offer accommodation to visitors, did not suffice to contain one half of those who required a night's lodging. 'Looking at the crowds continually moving between the church and the mountain, everywhere scattered about on the roads and in the streets, the whole plain,' he says, 'seemed as it were covered by a thousand tribes and nations.' There was every imaginable diversity of dress, language, and national physiognomy; German phlegm contrasting with Italian vivacity, each canton betraying its features of original character. One old couple had come from Alsace, the husband having led his blind wife hither in hopes that she might obtain the restoration of her sight. During the vespers that preceded the feast the church was so densely packed that it was impossible to make your way through the mass of human beings, but nevertheless not the slightest disorder prevailed. After vespers the priests entered the confessionals, and for the remainder of the day and through the long hours of night not a sound was to be heard but the continued murmur of prayers from the many pilgrims who kept devout vigil in different parts of the spacious edifice. At four in the morning the chapel of the Blessed Virgin was brilliantly illuminated, and masses began to be celebrated at the different altars, the high mass being sung at ten by the Apostolic Nuncio; but by far the most imposing scene was that presented by the grand procession by torch-light which took place in the evening, when the Blessed Sacrament was carried from the church to a temporary altar erected on the opposite side of the immense piazza, every portion of the surrounding buildings being lighted up, and made as visible as though it had been broad day. It was truly a mar-

vellous sight to see the immense crowd bowed in adoration, and this in an age when on every side we are told that faith is dead or dying, that the populace have no longer any confidence in the power of prayer or the virtue of holy relics, and in fine, to use the common phrase, that 'the age of miracles is past.' Those who think so, we would beg to examine the list of miraculous graces obtained before the statue of Our Lady of Einsiedlen where they will find the narratives of as many attested miracles belonging to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as are recorded to have taken place in the tenth. Of these, remarkable as they are, we shall not say more at present; but miraculous favours are not the only, or the chief, results which flow from these pilgrimages. Regarded in their most striking aspect they are great instruments for reviving and reinvigorating the springs of popular devotion, retreats, as it were, organised on a gigantic scale. The average number of confessions made here in the year is estimated at 120,000; on the eve of ordinary Sundays and feasts they vary from 1,000 to 1,500, the number being very much larger on occasion of the great annual festivals. At these times the confessors find it no easy task to satisfy the demands of the vast throng that invade their confessionals, and the law has been established that those who come from the greatest distance should be heard first. Just after the Revolution of July this excellent regulation gave rise to a ludicrous scene in the church. A crowd of German penitents had been waiting with passive perseverance near one of the confessionals, when the priest perceived some new-comers of another nation, and addressing his countrymen, 'My children,' he said, 'you must retire, here are some Frenchmen coming.' 'Blessed Virgin!' exclaimed one of the women, with a lamentable cry, 'the French are coming! it is all over with us.' And the good father had some difficulty in restoring tranquillity, and assuring her that the Frenchmen in question had come, not to burn Our Lady, but to confess their sins.

The apostolic labours of the good monks are not, however, confined to ministering to the wants of the pilgrims. The circle of Einsiedlen reckons altogether about 7,000 inhabitants whose dwellings are scattered about in remote mountain

districts, far apart and difficult of access. Six monks are constantly employed in giving missions among these villages and outlying districts. During the summer they go about on horseback, and during the winter, which lasts for eight months, they cross the snow on sledges visiting hamlet after hamlet, chiefly for the purpose of giving *catechisms*, or simple instructions in Christian doctrine, to the children and villagers. The administration of the parish of Einsiedlen itself is committed to twelve other Benedictines, all these ministerial duties being discharged by the religious community without any kind of remuneration.

CHAPTER IV.

FRANCE.

1.—*Our Lady of Fourvière, Lyons.*

THE traveller who has been induced either by curiosity or devotion to ascend the steep hill which rises in the midst of the city of Lyons will hardly fail to carry away with him impressions not easily effaced. Standing on the terrace which overlooks the vast amphitheatre below, he will perhaps recall with emotion the day when Pius VII. from the same spot gave his Apostolic benediction to the city which but a while before had publicly celebrated its apostasy from Christianity by the most horrible acts of sacrilege, but whose inhabitants, on the 18th of April, 1805, were assembled in one kneeling mass at the foot of that hill to receive the blessing of the Vicar of Christ. Or he will remind himself of the tradition which associates the name of St. Thomas of Canterbury with that of Fourvière, and if he be of English blood will feel a pleasure in the thought that *Notre-Dame-Saint-Thomas de Fourvière*, as it was called, was the first sanctuary raised to the honour of our great English martyr. Or it may be that glancing back yet further into the annals of the past, he will picture to his mind's eye the capital of Celtic Gaul as it stood in the days of its imperial splendour; when that same hill was covered with the vast forum of Trajan, with the palace of the Cæsars, and the temple of Venus, the tutelary deity of ancient Lugdunum; and when St. Pothinus, the first apostle of Lyons, there made his glorious confession of the faith, and the old man of ninety was kicked and trampled to death by an infuriated multitude shouting vengeance on the blasphemer of their gods.

But whatever may be the interest attaching to the Christian history of Lyons, it is not one of those spots which we visit

only for the sake of its associations with the past. It is a sanctuary where the faith may be seen surviving in all its active, living energy; where pilgrims still congregate, and miraculous graces are still received, and where the mother of God is still venerated in the heart of a great commercial city with all the ardour and simplicity of ancient times.

Lyons was always distinguished for its devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and a tradition, too well supported to admit of reasonable doubt, points to the crypt under the Church of St. Nazaire as the site of that subterranean oratory where St. Pothinus deposited the holy image of Our Lady which he had brought with him into Gaul. This crypt was the cradle of the Church of Lyons, a Church which, next to that of Rome, may perhaps be said with most justice to have been cemented with the blood of martyrs. The Forum, whence so many thousands were despatched to torture, or the Amphitheatre, did not however long survive its bloody triumphs over Christianity. Septimius Severus reduced it to a heap of ashes, as a punishment for the adherence of the citizens to the cause of his rival Albinus, and removed the seat of government to Treves. The hill covered with its marble ruins became known as the *Forum Vetus*, a title for which the Lyonnese Christians often substituted that of the *Holy Mountain*, or the *Hill of Blood*, but which appears to have been the derivation of the modern name of *Fourvière*. And in the ninth century a modest chapel, which was known as that of Our Lady of Good Counsel, was constructed out of the débris of the Roman buildings, forming that quadrangular portion of the church which stands beneath the tower, and in the foundations of which may still be detected several fragments of ancient marble. It did not at first attract any very large share of popular notice. The devotion of the Lyonnese naturally enough clung rather to the crypt and the image of St. Pothinus; and in 1030 another sanctuary of Our Lady was erected by Abbot Hogier in the Ile-Barbe, which bore the title of *Notre Dame de Grâces*. This was regarded by the boatmen of the Saone as so holy a place that when they descended the river every crew kept silence, and every oar was raised; not a word was uttered as they floated down the current, save only that as

they passed the towers of the church the captain of each vessel mounted on its poop, and saluted the Holy Isle with the Celtic ejaculation of 'Ben-hoia!' *

The sanctuary of Notre Dame de Fourvière, erected on a soil which had been purpled with the blood of martyrs, was destined to owe her celebrity in the first instance to the honour with which she surrounded the memory of another more recent martyr. The little chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel had been made over by the Emperor Lothaire to the canons of the cathedral church of St. John, one of whom, named Oliver de Chavannes, commenced the construction of a long nave, which was added to the original building in 1168. Guichard, the Archbishop of Lyons, had been Abbot of Pontigny, four years before, when St. Thomas à Becket took refuge there from the persecution of Henry II. From his hands the English primate had received the Cistercian cowl, which to the day of his death he never laid aside; and when Guichard was enthroned in his archiepiscopal city, St. Thomas, who regarded him as a personal friend, visited him there, a fact which is stated again and again in the ancient cathedral archives, though it has been overlooked by all English historians. One day, it is said, Archbishop Guichard was walking on the Place St.-Jean, in company with St. Thomas and the canon, Oliver de Chavannes. The conversation turned on the buildings just commenced on the hill above them, and St. Thomas, turning his eyes in that direction, inquired to whom the new sanctuary would be dedicated? 'To the first martyr who will shed his blood for the Church,' replied the Archbishop. 'Who knows if it may not be yourself, if your enemies procure you such an honour?' The words were said perhaps between jest and earnest; but, however that may have been, the metropolitan church of Lyons gave earnest tokens of her respect for the exiled English primate. She assigned him a house within the cloister, and the manor of Quincieu outside the city; and gloried in enrolling his name among her canons. The prebend held by him was enjoyed by his successors until the wars of the fourteenth

* Literally, '*Hail, wild duck!*' from the supposed resemblance of the island, in form and position, to that bird.

century; and English monks resided up to that time at the manor-house of Quincieu. Two years from the time when this conversation is supposed to have taken place St. Thomas won his glorious crown of martyrdom, and the nave of Fourvière, on its completion, was dedicated by Guichard and Oliver to the memory of their illustrious friend, whose canonisation took place in 1173, only three years after his assassination. It was natural enough that the memory of St. Thomas should be regarded with peculiar veneration in France, whose king and people had warmly espoused his cause during his lifetime, and given him generous hospitality for several years. A special grace received by Louis VII., as it was believed at the intercession of the martyr, widely extended this devotion. His eldest son, afterwards Philip Augustus, being attacked with fever, and at the point of death, St. Thomas appeared to the king three times in a dream, promising him the cure of the young prince on condition that he himself should visit his shrine at Canterbury. In consequence of this, King Louis crossed over to England, and was escorted from Dover to Canterbury with great pomp by Henry II. himself. After spending two days there watching and praying before the tomb, Louis made his offering of a splendid gold chalice, a magnificent diamond, which was afterwards worn on the finger of the sacrilegious plunderer, Henry VIII., and the annual grant of a hundred measures of wine. He then returned to France, where, to his unspeakable joy, he was met by his son, restored to perfect health. His gratitude for this favour knew no bounds, and in testimony of it he despatched additional offerings to the new sanctuary erected at Lyons in honour of the saint, and, according to some writers, came to visit it in person.

For many years after this event, St. Thomas of Canterbury was regarded as more immediately the patron of the church of Fourvière than our Blessed Lady; and it was on his feast, the 29th of December, that the chapter of the cathedral paid their annual visit as feudal lords to their vassal church, on which occasion they celebrated mass at the altar of the saint, and not on that of Our Lady. The canons of Fourvière, now erected into a collegiate church, in their turn paid their homage to the cathe-

dral on certain great festivals, and offered candles at the altars of St. John and St. Stephen, for in those times the feudal rights of superior churches were exacted with as rigorous a law as those of suzerain lords. At Easter a striking and picturesque custom preserved the memory of the tie which bound the two churches together. The count-canons of the cathedral, as they were honourably designated, mounted the towers of their church, and the collegiate chapter of Fourvière assembled on the terrace overlooking the city; then the bells of both churches rang out, and the two choirs sang in alternate verses, the *Alleluia*, and the Paschal hymn *O filii et filiae*. As time went on the church of Fourvière became regarded more and more as a sanctuary of Our Lady, and here, in 1466, Louis XI. came in pilgrimage praying before the altar of Our Lady of Good Counsel, where he left orders that a *Salve Regina* should thenceforth be sung daily after a low Mass, which he endowed in perpetuity. In the act drawn up by this king, granting certain privileges to the canons of *Notre-Dame-Saint-Thomas de Fourvière*, the name of 'Monseigneur Saint Thomas' holds the secondary place, and it is evident that the primary devotion was beginning to be paid to the more ancient chapel of Our Lady.

The change is partly to be attributed to the fact that the other sanctuaries of Our Lady in Lyons had lost somewhat of their former popularity. It is with devotion as with certain delicate plants which grow freely in solitary and unfrequented places, but disappear before the footsteps of men. The crypt of St. Nazaire, owing to the increase of the city, was now in the heart of a busy thoroughfare, and no longer enjoyed anything of that retirement which seems required for a place of pilgrimage. The Holy Island of Ile-Barbe had formerly been revered by the Lyonnese from the fact that it presented them with all the charms of religious solitude within reach of their city walls. But time, alas! has little respect for such retreats, and, as years sped on, the Ile-St.-Barbe was resorted to as a place of public amusement; and in fine weather, says one writer, 'you might see all the citizens of Lyons flock there on holidays, with their wives and families, bringing with them tambourine-players and other musicians; and the city trades

would come here to exercise with their drums and banners; the villagers from all the neighbourhood round came hither, moreover, dancing and singing; and when one of the abbots tried to close the meadows to the public, so as to put a stop to these revellings, the people rose *en masse*, and pulled down his walls.'

It was therefore no wonder that when so great a change had befallen the old sanctuaries of the Lyonnese, their devotion should turn into other channels; and the Holy Mountain of Fourvière, raised as it is above the noise and tumult of the city, seemed to attract them thither by a natural instinct. We find therefore that during the terrible famines of 1504, 1534, and 1556, when, according to the old chronicler Paradin, 'the earth seemed of fire, and the heavens of brass, when the flocks on the mountains all perished, and those on the plains were driven many leagues to drink at the waters of the Rhone and the Saone, all smaller rivulets being dried up,' the White Procession, as they were called, organised from all the country round to implore the mercy of God and the intercession of Our Lady in this great distress, generally directed their steps up the barren slopes of the Holy Hill of Fourvière. They came along, dressed in white sackcloth, bands of little children going first, barefoot and bareheaded, singing and crying, with accents of genuine and heart-touching distress, '*Sire Dieu! Mercy! Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us. Water! water! water!*'

What a cry was that! It drew tears, says Paradin, from the eyes of all who heard it, and it touched the heart of the Mother invoked with such childlike simplicity. The rain came at last, and that in such abundance that the vines were restored as if by miracle. That year, continues the same writer, we ate ripe grapes on the feast of St. John Baptist; the other fruit-trees flowered in September, as if it had been spring, and in many places bore fruit also a second time. Apples were seen as big as tennis-balls; prunes and nuts also, but these last did not reach maturity. This good, and, as it was believed, miraculous, season was granted to Lyons in 1556; the years that followed were years of sacrilege and profanation for Fourvière, which fell into the hands of a Calvinist mob, and was pillaged

both of its riches, and, what was worse, of the Tabernacle and its sacred contents. Lyons became one of the great strongholds of the heretics, and most of its Catholic inhabitants found themselves forced to abandon the place. The pen refuses to chronicle the horrible deeds perpetrated by those who now found themselves masters of the city, and who celebrated their triumph by the destruction and desecration of her churches. The four walls alone were left of the nave of St. Thomas and the Chapel of Our Lady of Fourvière; and when at last better days dawned over France, and the ecclesiastics were able to re-enter the city of Lyons, the canons of Fourvière passed from the Place de la Providence up to the door of their collegiate church, over heaps of blackened ruins. Owing to the poverty to which the canons were reduced by the late events, the restoration of the church was not completed before the year 1586, and during that time a new scourge, or rather a series of scourges, devastated Lyons, and made manifest to the world that, whatever else the Calvinists had laid in ruins, they had not succeeded in overthrowing the devotion of the people towards the Mother of God. Year after year the plague swept away its thousands of victims, one hundred thousand citizens in all having been said to have perished of this pestilence between the years 1564 and 1642. Deputations were sent by the magistrates with offerings to the shrines of Our Lady at Puy and Loreto, and on one of these occasions the plague stopped suddenly in the city, on the very day when the deputies entered the territory of Loreto. But it disappeared only to return again after a brief interval, until at last, in 1643, the magistrates solemnly determined to dedicate the city by vow to Our Lady de Fourvière. Ever since the restoration of that sanctuary its celebrity had been constantly on the increase, and the throng of worshippers and pilgrims became so great that five-and-twenty masses were daily celebrated in the church, and two ecclesiastics were constantly engaged in receiving the offerings of the pilgrims. The veneration formerly paid there to St. Thomas had become almost forgotten, eclipsed by the fame of the graces dispensed by the Blessed Virgin from the sanctuary of her choice. The vow of the Lyons magistrates expressed therefore the unanimous devotion of

their fellow-citizens, and from the moment that it was registered, the plague not only disappeared to return no more, but from that time neither the cholera nor any other contagious malady has ever held its ground in Lyons. In gratitude for this prompt answer to their prayers the city authorities bound themselves to visit Fourvière on the 8th of September every year, and to erect two images of the Blessed Virgin, one at the corner of the Place du Change, the other under a little dome in the middle of the Pont de Pierre, with an inscription recording the history of their vow. These two images remained as monuments of the devotion of the Lyonnese to their great patroness until the disastrous days of 1789, and the dome on the Pont de Pierre was still standing in 1820. But yet more unmistakeable evidence was given of their fervent gratitude to her whom they regarded as their deliverer, by the immense affluence of pilgrims who from this time flocked to pour out their vows before the holy sanctuaries. Even in 1630 these had been so numerous that the canons had to open a new door and erect another altar in their church, and three years later were forced to have recourse to the cathedral clergy to assist them in satisfying the devotion of the people. But from the hour that Lyons solemnly dedicated herself to the Blessed Virgin by the voice of her magistrates, the enthusiasm of the citizens took new life, and it must be added that their childlike confidence has from that time been rewarded by a continued stream of graces. Our limits will allow of our doing no more than refer to these, for there yet remains to tell of another hour of desolation for the sanctuary of Fourvière, followed however, as before, by another resurrection. Nowhere did the storm of the great revolution fall with greater violence than on the city of Lyons. On the 30th of August, 1792, the last Catholic Mass was celebrated at Fourvière, which was then abandoned for a time to some schismatic priests, and finally closed altogether. Meanwhile terrible scenes of sacrilege were enacted in the city. Paris had set up the Goddess of Reason, but it remained for Lyons to witness her three revolutionary proconsuls, Collet d'Herbois, Fouché, and Laporte, offering divine honours to the ashes of one of their colleagues, the ferocious Chalier, who had fallen under

the assassin's knife at the moment when he was about to deluge Lyons with the blood of her citizens. It was on the 10th of November, 1793, the very day when Paris consummated her great act of sacrilege in the cathedral of Notre Dame, that the decree was published closing all the churches in Lyons. The reign of atheism was inaugurated by a hideous ceremony. The urn containing the ashes of Châlier was placed on an altar of turf erected in the Place des Terreaux. The three proconsuls, surrounded by a crowd of ruffians and profligate women, who made the air ring with their cries of '*Vive la guillotine!*' approached, and one by one bent their knee in adoration of the martyr of liberty. Then followed an exhibition, the details of which would make the most indifferent shudder. An ass, decorated with the priestly insignia, was made to trample on the crucifix and the Book of the Gospels, and to drink out of a sacred chalice; and even yet more horrible profanities were in preparation, when they were put a stop to by what the miscreants themselves seem to have felt a preternatural sign of the Divine displeasure; the sky suddenly darkened, and such a terrific storm burst over the heads of the infamous assembly that with one accord they dispersed and fled from the spot in terror.

During the miserable years that followed, Our Lady of Fourvière was still invoked by those who remained faithful to the religion of their fathers, many of whom were accustomed to climb the holy hill by night and pray before the closed doors of the now desolate sanctuary for the return of better days. During the siege of Lyons by the revolutionary army, numbers performed this pilgrimage at the peril of their lives, and several extraordinary deliverances were accepted as tokens that Our Lady still retained her watchful guard over the city. When at last the Reign of Terror ended, and a certain sort of religious toleration was permitted, two brothers, both of them ecclesiastics, opened a little school not far from the church of Fourvière, and in their house the faithful secretly assembled for worship.

The accession of Napoleon as First Consul was soon followed by the public restoration of the Catholic worship, and one of the first acts of Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons, was to

repurchase the sanctuary of Fourvière. And when, in 1805, Pope Pius VII. was invited into France to preside at the coronation of the new Emperor, he himself reopened the church, offered the Holy Sacrifice within its walls, and gave holy communion to 1,200 persons; after which, as we have said, standing on the terrace which overlooks the city, he gave the Apostolic benediction to the kneeling population. No wonder that such a spectacle from such a spot drew from him the repeated exclamation of '*Bello, bello!*' The scenes which met his eye during his progress through France must have seemed to him like a rising from the dead, for as he himself expressed it when speaking to Fouché, '*He had travelled through a nation on its knees.*'

One other danger, however, still threatened Notre Dame de Fourvière. During the hundred days of Napoleon's restoration, after his escape from Elba, it became a matter of importance to him to strengthen the defences of Lyons, and Marshal Suchet was despatched thither, with orders, as it was believed, from his imperial master, to cover the holy mountain with fortifications. Such orders, if executed, would have implied the destruction of the sanctuary of Fourvière; but Suchet was a Lyonnese by birth, and had not entirely forgotten the religious impressions of his childhood. He inspected the ground indeed, and made a survey of the city from the top of the tower, but on descending thence, instead of announcing to the chaplains who awaited him in the sacristy his intention of levelling the church to the ground, he addressed them in words which were little expected from the mouth of the soldier of fortune. 'My mother often brought me here when a child,' he said, 'to pray before Our Lady's image. It is pleasant to remember those days. Be so good as to take these napoleons and say some Masses for my intention.' So saying, he laid some money on the table where the offerings were received, and, passing into the church, remained for some time kneeling before Our Lady's altar.*

* Suchet's devotion to the Blessed Virgin had been evinced during his campaign in Spain, when with equal resolution he refused to obey the orders of Joseph Buonaparte for the plunder of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Pillar. Nor did it pass without reward. He had the happiness of making

Fourvière was therefore spared, and during the last fifty years the devotion of the Lyonnese to their favourite sanctuary has increased rather than diminished. During the cholera years of 1832, 1835, 1849, and 1855, the exemption of the city from this terrible pestilence has been acknowledged as a grace due to the intercession of Our Lady. Nor has her protection been less remarkable during the political troubles of 1830 and 1848. In the latter year a bloody *émeute* was actually in preparation, when extraordinary prayers and vows were offered to Notre Dame de Fourvière; and the storm blew over in so singular and inexplicable a manner as to cause surprise to the revolutionary party themselves, one of whom was heard to observe, pointing to Our Lady's sanctuary, 'We shall do nothing here so long as that *Montagnarde* remains up there.'

Perhaps, however, the most remarkable scenes were those witnessed at Notre Dame de Fourvière during the insurrection which broke out in the city in 1834. The insurgents took possession of the hill, established their head-quarters within the church, displayed a black flag from its tower, and from their strong position exchanged a continuous fire with the troops. The chaplains of the sanctuary had been obliged to withdraw before there was time either to remove the Blessed Sacrament or to conceal the sacred vessels; but on the third day, the firing having somewhat subsided, what men had not the courage to do was effected by the resolution of a nun,—the Superioress of the Sisters of St. Joseph offered to mount the hill alone, and see what could be done with the armed mob then in possession of the sanctuary. She presented herself before the workmen who were assembled round a huge fire lighted in the church porch. 'My good friends,' she said, 'I see you are forced to take shelter in the church; the presence of the Blessed Sacrament must embarrass you; shall I bring a priest to fetch It away?' 'Yes, that is a good thought,' replied the leader; 'we shall then be more at our ease.' 'You will also give me leave to enter the sacristy and put things a

a Christian end, and received the consolations of religion before his death in 1826, a fact unhappily sufficiently rare among the public men of that time, to be worthy of record.

little to rights ?' 'Yes, *ma sœur*, you may go and do what you like.'

The brave religious lost no time in descending the hill and returning with two priests, and all three were allowed to enter the church. They found about twenty men and as many women, all of the lowest order, bivouacked in the nave, eating, drinking, cooking their meat at a large fire, drying their powder, and preparing fresh ammunition. But marvellous to say, the altars had not been touched. A barricade of chain had even been raised to wall off the sanctuary, and neither the tabernacle nor the image of Our Lady had received any profanation. The priests at once removed the Blessed Sacrament, and as they carried It out of the church, the sentinels gave the usual military salute, and some of them even followed as an escort, as far as the *Providence*, where It was deposited in safety. The good nun remained behind to take charge of the sacred vessels. She had brought a large sack with her into which she put every article of value she could carry, and what she could not carry she concealed in secure places. No one interfered with her or opposed her proceedings, and she was permitted to retire with her treasures, receiving every mark of respect as she passed through the ranks of the insurgents.

The next day the combat recommenced, and terminated in the triumph of the troops; and when the insurrection was over, every one had something to say of the graces which had been obtained during those six terrible days, from Notre Dame de Fourvière. A number of workmen who took no part in the insurrection had retired to a large building known as the *Maison Brunet*. A shot which killed a lieutenant of the royal troops was falsely surmised to have been fired from this house, and without further enquiry a furious discharge of artillery was opened upon the house. The workmen, unarmed and defenceless, invoked Our Lady of Fourvière, and *the firing stopped*; for a priest had at that moment forced his way to the terrace then occupied by the king's troops, and persuaded them to spare the innocent. Not a man had been injured by the tremendous volley, and a few days later the victims who had thus so marvellously escaped destruction went in procession to Our Lady's altar to

render thanks to their good Mother, and deposited as their *ex-voto* offering a picture representing the Maison Brunet at the moment of the cannonade.

The fact, however, that a few workmen had been able to hold the Holy Mountain for several days against a royal army of 7000 men, sufficiently proved its strength as a military post, and the old plan of converting it into a fortified citadel was revived in good earnest. But this time the intentions of the Government were defeated by the piety of the Lyonnese. With one voice they protested against such a profanation, and petitions poured in, entreating that nothing might be done to destroy 'the church of the Lyonnese people.' They reminded the Government of July that 'there was something even more precious than a fortress,' and that in sacrificing the sanctuary of Notre Dame de Fourvière, they would be striking a blow at the hearts of all her votaries. Their earnestness prevailed, and Fourvière has not only escaped destruction, but its church has been restored and enlarged with greater splendour than ever. The Lyonnese have conceived the plan of raising on the Hill of Martyrs a monument which shall at once commemorate Our Lady's patronage of their city, and their own devotion. A new tower has already been completed, surmounted by a colossal image of Our Lady in gilded bronze, visible from every part of the city, over which she is represented as extending her hands as if in benediction. The buildings which a few years since disfigured the side of the hill are in process of being cleared away, and in place of the former mean and fatiguing approach, a magnificent winding road has been cut, planted with trees, so as to form an easy and agreeable ascent. Sixteen thousand masses are celebrated on an average during the year, and at least 200,000 communions are annually made within the sanctuary. During the month of May alone, there have been as many as 27,000 communions, or something like a thousand a day; and in spite of all the revolutions it has undergone, the walls of Notre Dame de Fourvière exhibit at this moment more than 4000 *ex-voto* offerings. Elephant trappings sent from Egypt, and a Chinese picture from Peking, appear in the midst of a forest of crutches, glittering in not a few places with crosses

of the Legion of Honour, and spangled in every direction with gold and silver hearts. Nor must we in conclusion fail to notice the last ornament presented to the sanctuary by the piety of the Lyonnese. In the enclosed space outside the church, fifteen small columns were raised in 1864, on which appear representations of the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary, and the custom has established itself for pilgrims to prepare themselves for their visit to Our Lady by devoutly performing what is called 'the stations of the rosary.' On the feast of Our Lady, it is a common thing for surrounding parishes to come hither in procession with their *curés* at their head, and Fourvière still remembers with veneration the pilgrimage made here by the holy *curé* of Ars and his people.* Such facts have their own significance; they prove that, to use the words of Pius VII., France still preserves her faith, and that 'the City of Martyrs,' as it has been termed by one of its own saints, has done well in protesting to an infidel government that the faith of a generous people is a surer protection against the assaults of revolution, than the garrison of half a million of bayonets.

2.—*Our Lady of Laus.*

At about two leagues distance from the city of Gap, in the department of the High Alps, lies the little valley of Laus, shut in by wooded mountains and surrounded by other valleys, through which the river Vence winds its way. A more picturesque locality can hardly be imagined. The mountains of Théus and St. Maurice appear clothed with forests to their very summits, whilst to the south appear the distant peaks of the Lower Alps, contrasting in their barren and savage grandeur with the rich vegetation which adorns the hills in the immediate vicinity of Laus. As the traveller approaches this beautiful region from the valley of the Vence, he suddenly discovers the church of Laus lying as it were at his feet, and is reminded by a profusion of pious monuments which meet

* 'The pilgrimage to Fourvière,' says M. Monin, in his 'Life of the *Curé d'Ars*,' 'marked the precise epoch of the religious transformation of the parish' (tom. i. p. 229).

his eye at every turn that he is approaching a spot specially consecrated to devotion. Chapels and crosses rise on all sides to commemorate some event in the life of the poor shepherdess to whom the place owes all its celebrity, and the marvels of whose story receive a certain confirmation from what we may call a greater marvel still. A simple unlettered peasant girl two centuries ago kept her sheep on these mountains, and succeeded in transforming a rude and unfrequented wilderness into a vast focus of religious life; leaving among her native hills so vivid a memory of herself, that time and revolution have not had power to destroy it, and our own unbelieving century still beholds pilgrims resorting to the spots made memorable by the apparitions of Our Lady to the shepherdess Benoîte.

We shall relate the story of the servant of God simply as it has been preserved, without retrenching anything from the marvellous character which attaches to it. And let it be remembered that these events did not take place in the dim religious light of mediæval antiquity, nor are they magnified in our eyes as we behold them through the mist of a long series of centuries. Scarcely 150 years have elapsed since the death of the Shepherdess of Laus, and she lived during a period when the faith of Europe was on the wane, and when men were disposed to anything rather than an over-credulous superstition.

Benoîte Rencurel was born at St. Étienne on the feast of St. Michael, 1647. Her parents were humble peasants who lived by the labour of their hands; and in her twelfth year, Benoîte was put out to service, to keep the sheep of a neighbouring farmer, taking with her her clothes and her rosary as her only property. During her childhood she had been distinguished for her great tenderness to the poor, and had once earned a sound beating from her mother for giving away food during a time of famine; she had also early evinced a remarkable love of prayer. So much distress prevailed at that time in the country that her master was unable to charge himself with her entire maintenance, and to earn a living Benoîte hired herself out during alternate weeks to a poor widow. The farmer was a brutal character, who up to that time had

never been able to keep anyone in his service, but the simplicity and sweetness of Benoîte not only protected her from his cruelty, but had such a softening effect on his hard nature, that in a short time he became another man. The widow was almost as destitute as Benoîte herself, and the little shepherdess found ample opportunities for exercising her cherished virtue of charity, often sharing her scanty provisions among the six hungry children of the house, and silencing their scruples by the assurance that she herself would have plenty to eat next week. It was thus she grew up in the midst of labour and privation, simple, charitable, and devout, when one day, chancing to listen to a sermon wherein the village curé spoke much of the love of the Blessed Virgin for sinners, and the singular protection which she extended to those who consecrated themselves to her service, Benoîte conceived an ardent desire of being numbered among her special clients, and at the same time the wish sprang up in her heart that she might be found worthy to behold the Blessed Mother of God of whose mercy and tenderness to the unfortunate she heard so much.

She was accustomed very frequently to lead her sheep to the mountain of St. Maurice, on the summit of which stood an old ruined chapel, dedicated to that saint. One day in the May of the year 1664, Benoîte, who was then about sixteen years of age, sat down near the ruins to say her chaplet; she was ignorant what had been the nature of the building, and also of the fact that close to it was to be found a spring of water, though this latter circumstance would have been most welcome news, for during her long days on the barren hill-side, she often suffered greatly from thirst. As she sat thus with her flock grazing around, she perceived an old man approaching her, of venerable aspect, dressed in red and wearing a beard. He addressed her, asking her 'what she did there?' to which she replied, with her usual simplicity, 'that she was watching her sheep, and praying to the good God, but that she was very thirsty.' 'Yet there is water close by you,' said the old man; and he then pointed out the well, which is still to be seen, and which to this day produces abundance of excellent water. Benoîte, who had no suspicion of the celestial

character of her visitor, thanked him heartily, and pressed him to eat some of her bread, when he made known to her that he was St. Maurice, the patron of that mountain, and desired her to lead her flock to a valley near St. Étienne, where the desire of her heart would be granted to her. The spot indicated is a sort of ravine which extends from the village to the borders of the forest which crowns the hill; on the eastern side is still pointed out a little cavern where Benoîte was in the habit of retiring to say her rosary before taking her frugal repast. Hither therefore the little shepherdess directed her steps on the following day, and towards evening she saw standing on a rock, known as *Les Fours*,* a lady and child both of singular beauty. The lady did not speak to her, and for two months these apparitions were constantly renewed on the same spot, before Benoîte summoned courage to ask her name. Nevertheless, although not a word had been spoken by her visitor, her presence filled the heart of Benoîte with joy, and a certain spiritual illumination; but it does not seem certain that she recognised who it was who thus appeared to her, and though on returning home she spoke to all her neighbours of the beautiful lady she had seen on the rock, she never gave them any reason to suppose that she had been favoured with a heavenly vision.

During these two months the flocks showed the same mysterious attraction to the valley of St. Étienne as their young mistress, a fact the more remarkable as the ravine was rocky and barren, and the pasturage extremely scanty. The neighbours were not slow to inform the farmer that if he suffered his sheep to be driven every day to a spot where there was nothing for them to eat, he would lose them all, and become the laughing-stock of the village. As to the farmer's wife, she also had complaints to make of Benoîte, who now never returned till late in the evening, and who on her appearance was commonly received with blows. In obedience to her master's orders therefore, Benoîte conducted her flock to a better pasturage, lying in a different direction from her favourite ravine, but no sooner had they reached the spot indicated by the farmer, which afforded an abundance of

* A chapel now stands on the spot, erected in 1835.

excellent grass, than of their own accord they set off full speed to the barren valley in spite of every effort made by Benoîte to stop them. When this fact was related to the farmer he would not believe it, and to insure his orders being carried out, he next day led his sheep to pasture himself, but had the mortification of seeing them all trot off in the direction of the forbidden ravine by a sort of instinct which he found himself unable to overcome. He was forced to allow that there was something in it which he did not understand, and seeing that the sheep were really in better condition than those of his neighbours, he thenceforth allowed Benoîte to do as she pleased.

After this time the mysterious apparitions were very frequently renewed, and Benoîte was allowed not only to see, but even to converse with her whom she still called by no other name than that of her Beautiful Lady. The matter was talked of in the neighbourhood, and one of the magistrates of the province, named M. Grimaud, considered it his duty to interrogate the shepherdess on the subject. Benoîte answered all his questions with the utmost simplicity, but as she declared herself entirely ignorant who the Beautiful Lady was, the magistrate was at a loss what to think. The advice he gave her, however, was to make a good confession and communion, and then the next time she saw the Lady to approach her and respectfully enquire her name. Benoîte followed the wise counsel, and having prepared herself by a worthy reception of the sacraments, she summoned courage to ask the Lady who she was. 'I am Mary, the Mother of Jesus,' was the reply, 'and it is the will of my Son that I should be honoured in this parish, though not on this spot. You will therefore desire the prior to come hither in procession together with his parishioners.' Benoîte, filled with joy on learning who her Beautiful Lady was, hastened to communicate her orders to the prior, who after careful investigation of the facts decided on giving credit to the heavenly message, and, on August 29, a solemn procession was made to the valley, at which all the villagers assisted, headed by their pastor.

After this incident, Benoîte was given to understand that she would not again behold Our Lady in that valley; and it was not until a month later that she was favoured with

another apparition. This time Our Lady appeared on a little eminence near the road leading from Laus to St. Étienne, now marked by a small oratory, and made known to Benoîte that if she wished to see her again, she must repair to a little chapel at Laus, the road to which she pointed out. The next day Benoîte found her way to the chapel in question; it bore the title of Notre Dame de Bon-Rencontre, and had been built in 1640, but since then had fallen into partial ruin. The sight of its dusty walls and neglected altar filled Benoîte with sorrow when she reflected that this was the chosen sanctuary of the Mother of God, but Our Lady made known to her that ere long this poor and squalid building would be replaced by a large church, richly adorned, and served by many priests, that many sinners would be converted here, and that the money required for such a building would be furnished from the pence of the poor.

From this time Benoîte every day visited the chapel, where she spent long hours in prayer, leaving her flock to the care of Providence. No accident ever befel them, nor did her master oppose her doing as she chose. The rumour of what had passed very soon spread among the villagers, and induced them also to resort to the little oratory in ever-increasing numbers. Many of these, touched by grace, devoutly prepared themselves for the sacraments, and it was found necessary to engage priests to attend on the spot to hear the confessions of the pilgrims. The chapel very soon became too small to contain the hundreds who daily presented themselves, and an altar for the celebration of mass had to be erected out of doors, while the priests heard confessions under the rocks and trees of the valley. Whole parishes came hither in procession from many miles' distance, thirty-five such processions arriving on a single day. Some of these had journeyed on foot for fourteen hours, and this manifestation of popular devotion took place before any official examination had been made into the circumstances to which it owed its origin. Many signal graces, both spiritual and temporal, were granted to the prayers of the pilgrims; miraculous cures, and striking conversions were of continued recurrence, until at length in September 1665, the ecclesiastical authorities felt it their

duty to investigate the whole affair. And M. Lambert, the Vicar-General of the diocese of Embrun, accompanied by twenty-two other ecclesiastics of rank and learning, proceeded to Laus to set on foot a juridical enquiry. Benoîte was subjected by them to a severe examination. The Vicar-General made her understand that they were not come there to authorise her visions and foolish fancies, and that if she was detected in any imposture, she would be severely punished. One after another the examiners then attacked her with questions, arguments, and even with ridicule; they strove now to embarrass and now to intimidate her, but the simplicity and integrity of the poor shepherdess withstood the trial, and she replied to their questions with a precision and modest self-possession that filled them with surprise.

Providence had so ordered it, that the Vicar-General and his companions should themselves be eyewitnesses of a striking miracle wrought during their visit. Twice they had made preparations to depart, and each time violent torrents of rain had obliged them to return to their lodgings. It seemed as if against their wills they were to be detained at Laus, in order to be able to bear witness to one of those prodigies the truth of which they were as yet unwilling to allow. On the very day they were to leave, a poor crippled woman, named Catherine Vial, who had for years been entirely deprived of the use of her limbs which were withered and bent under her, was suddenly restored to strength on the ninth day of a novena which she had made to Notre Dame de Laus. Every day during the novena, the Vicar-General had seen her carried to and from the chapel, and it was while he himself was saying mass at the altar, that he now beheld her enter, walking alone and without support, and heard the by-standers exclaiming, 'a miracle! a miracle! Catherine Vial is cured!' 'I myself was serving his Mass,' writes M. Gaillard, the Grand-Vicar of Gap, who has preserved all these particulars, 'and I perceived he was so overcome that he could hardly finish the last gospel, and the cards on the altar were moistened with his tears.' *

* A month later the parish of St. Julien, to which Catherine belonged, made the pilgrimage to Laus in procession, their banner being carried by Catherine herself.

A fresh enquiry was now set on foot into the truth of this fact; not only the woman herself and her family, but the two surgeons who had attended her, were rigorously questioned. The latter were both of them Calvinists, and when they heard of the proposed novena, had declared themselves willing to become Catholics if they should see her ever able to walk again. They had seen her returning from chapel, and not only attested that her disease had been incurable by human means, but avowed themselves convinced by what they had seen, and ready to abjure their heresy. The procès-verbal of these events was drawn up by the Vicar-General, who desired that a *Te Deum* should be chanted in the chapel in thanksgiving for so signal a grace, and who became from that time the firm protector and friend of the shepherdess, and of the work of which she was chosen as the instrument.

And in fact poor Benoîte was often subjected to trials, wherein she stood in need of protection. Many persons of rank and influence regarded her as an impostor, and attempts were made not only to bring her into discredit, but even to have her driven from Laus and consigned to prison. In spite of this hostility, however, the pilgrimage continued to increase, and four years after the first apparition of Our Lady in the chapel of Laus, M. Lambert decided on erecting a church on the site of the chapel, which was altogether inadequate to the wants of the pilgrims. M. Gaillard met him at Laus in order to consult with him on the subject, and has left an account of what passed on the occasion. The plan of the Vicar-General was to build a small church, seven or eight fathoms long, containing two or three altars, and on the representation of M. Gaillard that it ought to be at least fifteen fathoms, he replied that he had never contemplated such an undertaking, that the pilgrimage would probably last at most a dozen years, and would then die away, and that it would be impossible to find funds for so large a building. After some demur he at last consented that the foundations should be dug for *twelve* fathoms, and entrusted the direction of the works to M. Gaillard. 'I remember very well,' he writes, 'that when we began to dig the foundations we had no money; we had some alms-boxes made, and M. Naz, one of the directors of the works, asked

alms with one of these; a poor woman dressed in rags, to whom one would have felt disposed to give relief if one had met her on the road, came gently behind him, and slipped in a louis d'or; that was sufficient for the first week, the next week we had ten crowns, and so it went on, so that we were never in want either of money, material, or workmen; it was 'the pence of the poor' that built the entire church, though in point of fact it cost more than 15,000 livres.'

The pilgrims aided the rising work with their alms and their labour. It became the custom, whenever a parochial procession visited Laus, for every member of it, man, woman, and child *to bring a stone*. A year was devoted to collecting the necessary materials, and then the building began in good earnest. We have said that M. Gaillard had originally proposed to M. Lambert that the length of the church should be fifteen fathoms, and singularly enough the additional length was added by order of the Vicar-General, who on coming to survey the works found that by some unaccountable omission no provision had been made in the plans for a sanctuary; he therefore ordered one to be added to the erection then in progress, and in less than four years the church was completed with the exception of the portico, which, however, was built at the expense of the Archbishop of Embrun, then ambassador at Madrid, who having recovered from a dangerous sickness in consequence of a vow made to Notre Dame de Laus, wished to make this portico his thank-offering.

Although the erection of this magnificent church on a spot so humble seemed in itself to confirm the truth of the revelation made to Benoîte, the success of her work only increased the number and malice of her enemies. After the death of M. Lambert, which took place very soon after the consecration of the church, certain members of the chapter of Embrun revived all the old accusations against the shepherdess of Laus. They caused a paper to be affixed to the church door, threatening with excommunication any priest who dared to say Mass there, or any lay person who received the Sacrament within its walls. It is needless to say that an interdict of such a character, and from such an authority, was altogether unlawful, neither did those who published it ever dare to carry its threats into effect.

A new Vicar-General was soon appointed, who summoned Benoîte to Embrun, and subjected her to a second examination, which terminated in his declaring that the pilgrimage of Notre Dame de Laus was the work of God, and that the innocence and sanctity of Benoîte were above suspicion. The newly appointed archbishop, Monseigneur de Genlis, even visited Laus in person, and on beholding the church crowded with its devout worshippers, exclaimed aloud, '*Vere Dominus est in loco isto.*' He also questioned Benoîte closely, and wrote down her answers with his own hand, declaring afterwards that he had never witnessed more simple or more solid piety.

In fact, the reputation for sanctity which the shepherdess of Laus enjoys does not by any means rest merely on the apparitions with which she was favoured. Her devotion to Jesus and his Holy Mother was not alone evinced by prayers and extasies, but by the far surer tokens of humility, disinterestedness, charity, and forgiveness of injuries. The work to which she devoted herself was to labour by prayer and severe austerities for the conversion of sinners. This idea had never left her soul since she had one day been granted a vision of her Divine Lord hanging on his cross: this then was what He had suffered for sinners, and this was the love He bore them! Such were the thoughts which the piteous spectacle engraved on the heart of Benoîte, and from that hour her sole desire was to suffer and to love with Him. She often prolonged her fasts for many days, and observed a continual abstinence, living only on bread and a little fruit. She watched the greater part of every night, and only slept on the bare ground. Thrice a week for the space of thirty years she went barefoot to that spot on the road between Laus and Avançon, where the vision above spoken of had appeared to her, and spent many hours there, weeping and praying for the conversion of sinners, and all the rest of her time she devoted herself to the service of the pilgrims. Many were the souls who owed their lasting conversion to her charitable exhortations, and not a few have borne witness to the marvellous gift which she possessed of penetrating into the secrets of their consciences. Of her other mortifications, in the shape of hair-cloths, disciplines, chains, and endurance of excessive cold, we will only

add, that she was at last warned by Our Lady to moderate their excess, and that, by the testimony of all who knew her, she made her life one long-continued martyrdom.

Far from dying away at the end of a dozen years, as M. Lambert had expected, the devotion to Notre Dame de Laus constantly assumed larger proportions. At the suggestion of Benoîte, regular retreats were established eight times a year, which were conducted according to fixed rules, and were the means of effecting a great revival of solid piety. And what is more, this religious movement of which Laus had become the centre, survived more than one crisis which threatened the entire destruction of the new sanctuary. In 1692 the troops of the Duke of Savoy entered Dauphiny, and laid siege to Embrun. Benoîte with many of her fellow-villagers took refuge at Marseilles, whilst the hostile forces overran the country, pillaged the church of Laus, and destroyed whatever they were not able to carry off. When she was at length able to return to her native valley, the servant of God was profoundly afflicted at beholding the profanation which had been offered to the sanctuary. The house of the priests had been burnt, and the marble altars dashed to pieces; everything was in ruins and desolation, but Benoîte did not lose heart. 'We have more than we had twenty-eight years ago,' she said, and she at once set about the work of restoration. Once again this was accomplished with the pence of the poor; no rich benefactors came forward; but one village contributed wood, another stone, a third wagons and horses; Benoîte herself directed and encouraged their labours, and in a few months' time the church of Laus presented even a better appearance than it had done before the invasion.

A more serious danger menaced the prosperity of Laus, when, on the death of the priests who had up to that time served the sanctuary, others were appointed of Jansenistic principles, who no sooner found themselves in possession of the place than they used every effort to put a stop to the pilgrimage. They caused all the oratories erected in the different localities of Laus to be destroyed, they drove away the pilgrims, and publicly preached from the pulpit against the popular devotion exhibited towards Our Lady; and not only

did they forbid Benoîte to discharge her accustomed offices in the holy chapel, the altar and linen of which she had hitherto had charge of, but they refused to admit her to the Sacraments, put her in a sort of confinement, and only allowed her to hear Mass once a week. This persecution lasted for twenty years, during all which time Benoîte submitted to their injurious treatment with her usual docility and resignation; the only order which she refused to obey, was that she should use her influence with the people to deter them from resorting to Laus, for this would have been, as she considered, a direct disobedience to the Divine commands. Her only weapons of defence were prayer and confidence, and they did not fail to effect her deliverance. In 1712 the Archbishop of Embrun removed the priests of Laus, and confided the care of the sanctuary to a congregation of missionaries, known as that of Notre Dame de Sainte-Garde, and no sooner was the change effected than everything returned into its former channel; the pilgrimage became more frequented than ever, and the fruit of souls more marvellous and abundant. Benoîte, who had lived to see this happy fulfilment of her prayers and ardent desires, understood that her work was ended, and that she had nothing more to do but to prepare for death. She expired in fact, on the feast of Holy Innocents, 1718, at the age of seventy-one years, fifty-six of which had been spent in founding and supporting the sanctuary which seemed to have been entrusted to her guardianship by the Mother of God.

Her body lies buried in front of the high altar of Laus, and is covered with a stone, bearing the following inscription:—

Tombeau de la Sœur Benoîte,
Morte en odeur de sainteté
Le 28 décembre 1718.

The title of *sister* is here bestowed on her, in consequence of her having been associated to the third Order of St. Dominic. Eighty years later the tomb was opened and the body was discovered perfectly incorrupt. The voice of the people has long since expressed their pious conviction of her heroic sanctity, and it is understood that the necessary informations are at this time being drawn up by the ecclesiastical authori-

ties with the view of introducing the process of her beatification at Rome.

The devotion of the people in no degree slackened after the death of Benoîte. The missionaries continued their pious labours, and pilgrims continued to resort to Laus in great numbers up to the year 1791, when the revolution came once more to lay waste the holy sanctuary. The priests were driven away, all the ornaments of the church seized, the church itself shut up, and the houses erected for the use of the pilgrims either burnt or sold. Frightful sacrileges were perpetrated by the brutal ruffians who carried out the orders of their masters, and who destroyed and desecrated whatever they were unable to carry off. They were directed to efface every memorial of piety in the neighbourhood, to demolish all the crosses and oratories in the surrounding valleys, and 'to purge the country of their odious presence,' and these orders they carried out to the letter. But they were unable to destroy the devotion which had struck its roots into the hearts of the people. All through the miserable days of the Reign of Terror the peasants continued to resort to their ruined and desolate sanctuary, to bring thither their sick, and to invoke the aid of the Mother of God in all their tribulations. On occasion of a great drought which threatened to destroy all hopes of a harvest, the surrounding villages even insisted on making a solemn public procession to Laus, as in former times, and their faith was rewarded by a fall of rain, which restored their lands to fertility. At last, when order was restored, in 1802, Monsignor Miollis, Bishop of Digne, purchased and restored the church, and reopened it for public worship. Three of the surviving missionaries returned to their old post, and at once the devotion of the people, forcibly restrained for a time, broke forth with a greater enthusiasm than ever. Ocular witnesses have described the scenes they themselves witnessed in 1804, when the entire church was blocked up by the crowds of penitents, and the priests in attendance were found insufficient to satisfy the requirements of the pilgrims. In course of time a new congregation of missionary priests was established at Laus, the retreats and other pious exercises were revived, and new oratories and chapels erected on the site of

those destroyed by the Revolutionists. At this moment Notre Dame de Laus probably attracts a greater number of pilgrims than even during the days of Benoîte, and it is no uncommon thing on the greater feasts to see altars erected out of doors for the celebration of Mass, in order to accommodate the vast crowds that overflow the spacious church. The average number of those who visit Laus in the course of the year is 80,000, of which the greater proportion attend at the Feast of Pentecost, and during the October retreat. On these occasions as many as thirty-six or even forty priests are to be seen attending in the confessionals, where they often have to remain during the entire night. Many extraordinary graces have been received at these times, of which testimony is to be found in the *ex-voto* offerings which cover the walls.

The visitor to Laus will find the memory of Benoîte still fresh in the breasts of the people, and all the surrounding valleys filled with pious monuments attesting their faith in those apparitions which were vouchsafed to her by the Mother of God. The grotto where the little shepherdess was accustomed to pray, the rock where Our Lady first appeared to her, the chapel of Notre Dame d'Érable, where, according to her history, she had to sustain many assaults from the evil one; another, called the Chapel of the Angel, where her good angel is said to have appeared to her in visible form; the Oratory of Pindreau, on the spot where the Blessed Virgin first directed her to go to Laus; and finally, that of the Cross, on the road where she beheld the Vision of Jesus crucified: all these and more are numbered among the holy places of Laus. Swept away once by war, and again by an anti-religious revolution, they have each time been restored, and not merely the material buildings have reappeared, but with them the faith, the devotion, the indescribable atmosphere of piety which seems to hang about this celebrated place of pilgrimage.

At the close of a late retreat, one of those who had assisted at its exercises exclaimed with great emotion, 'Why do they not preach like this in our parish!' One of the missionaries who overheard him, replied, 'In your parish, very probably they preach not only as well, but a great deal better than they do here; only here there is an *invisible preacher, who speaks to*

the heart.' And these few words contain the secret of that wonderful influence which is felt by those who visit holy sanctuaries in the true spirit of pilgrimage. God makes Himself felt there as the *invisible preacher*; He draws souls to these his secret places, that He may *speak to their hearts*, and the long list of miraculous cures and graces which fill the chronicles of such sanctuaries are but a feeble exterior token of far more numerous and prodigious graces granted invisibly to penitent and believing souls.

3.—Our Lady of Puy.

THE legendary history of the venerable church of Puy presents us with the first instance on record of an apparition of the Blessed Virgin. Whatever may be the worth of such legends in the eyes of critics, they incontestably assist us in tracing back some of the popular devotions of Christendom to periods of very remote antiquity, and possess a certain weight and value which no unprejudiced mind can disallow. These childish legends, as some regard them, enjoy a marvellous vitality; they have survived through ages of rationalism and revolution, and if our own generation has witnessed such a spectacle as the inauguration of an image of Notre Dame de France on the *Rocher Corneille*, it must be owned that the erection of that monument in the year of grace 1860, was but the offspring of a piety which dates its earliest traditions from the apostolic age. We shall give these traditions as they stand therefore, regarding them if not as certainly authentic, at least as being entitled to respect and veneration, and certainly as not ranking among the least interesting narratives of their kind. It was in the year 46 or 47 of the Christian era, according to the French historians, that the first missionaries were sent into Gaul by St. Peter, and amongst these St. George of Velay, as he is commonly called, became first bishop of that church. One of the new converts, a certain devout widow named Villa, having fallen sick of a fever, invoked the aid of the Holy Virgin, and was consoled by a vision in which Our Lady desired her to ascend a certain hill in the neighbourhood, then called Anis, or Anicium, which

she had chosen as the site of a future sanctuary to be erected in her honour, promising her that she should there receive her cure. Villa obeyed the command, and made her attendant carry her to the spot indicated, where, being laid to rest on a large stone, she fell asleep, and woke in perfect health.

The facts being made known to St. George, he proceeded to the spot in company with his clergy, but when they came in sight of the Cornelian Rock, they paused in surprise. It was a hot summer's day, the 11th of July, but Mount Corneille was covered with a sparkling veil of freshly fallen snow. As they still gazed in wonder at so strange a spectacle, a stag sprang out of a neighbouring thicket, and with light step bounded round the rock, and then galloped back again to her woody covert, leaving on the snow the traces of her feet. St. George directed the area thus marked out to be enclosed by a hedge, and St. Martial afterwards chose the place to be occupied by the altar of the future church, and left as a precious relic, to be preserved in it for ever, one of the shoes of the Blessed Virgin which he had brought with him from Rome.

Nevertheless, it was not until the episcopate of St. Vosy, or Evodius, that the church was actually commenced. Another miraculous cure wrought on the person of a paralytic woman when laid upon the same stone, determined him in 220, according to the early writers, or in 560, according to the more sceptical critics of the last century, to build the church, and fix his episcopal see at Anis. The authorisation of the Pope was necessary, for which purpose Evodius journeyed to Rome, and returned in company with a young Roman architect named Scrutarius. In seven years they completed building the round apse and cupola now occupied by the chapter stalls, and commonly called 'the Angelic Chamber.' When it was finished, say the historians of Puy, the bishop again set out for Rome, accompanied by his architect, to solicit permission for its solemn consecration, but they had not proceeded half a league before they were met by two venerable old men, each carrying a casket of gold, containing relics brought as they said from Rome, which they presented to the Bishop, desiring him to deposit them in the church of Mount

Anis, which at that moment they assured him was being consecrated by the hands of angels. They then disappeared, and the bishop returning barefoot to his church, found it illuminated by 300 torches, and the altar still anointed with an oil of delicious fragrance. Two of these torches are still exhibited in the treasury of Puy; the church never received any other consecration, and has henceforth borne the title of the Church of the Angels.

As the population increased, and a city gradually gathered round the foot of the mountain, the apse of St. Vosz was found far too small for the purposes of a cathedral. In the ninth century the Angels' Tower was added, and a portion of the transept, then the nave, and finally the great porch, in different styles of architecture, all more or less of the Byzantine character, which, however, harmonise together, and from their unmistakeable air of genuine antiquity produce an effect at once devotional and picturesque.

Accepting the chronology of the most incredulous critics, we are therefore bound to assign the church of Puy an antiquity which dates at the very least from the sixth century, from which time to our own day Notre Dame de Puy has constantly remained a place of devout pilgrimage.

It would altogether surpass our limits to attempt anything like a history of this venerable sanctuary; and we can but select a few of the facts of special interest which fill its chronicles. 'Puy Notre Dame,' as it soon came to be called, is associated in a particular manner with the story of the Crusaders. When Urban II. visited France to open the Council of Clermont and preach the First Crusade, he came to Puy, and was there received by its famous Bishop, Adhémar de Montheil, who was the first man to assume the cross, and who accompanied Godfrey de Bouillon to the Holy Land in quality of Legate of the Holy See. A new door was opened in the wall of the church on this occasion, to admit the Vicar of Christ, after which it was walled up again, only to be reopened when any of his successors in the Chair of St. Peter should visit the cathedral. Here, at the foot of Our Lady's altar, Urban II. passed the entire feast of the Assumption 1095, praying for the success of his great enterprise, and the

deliverance of the Holy Land; and here, before leaving his beloved city, Adhémar de Montheil prostrated on the same spot, and then as by sudden inspiration arose and intoned an anthem, then heard for the first time, but which each successive generation of Christians has repeated with increased devotion: '*Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiae, vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve!*' Whether, as stated by the Puy historians, Adhémar were really the author of this anthem, or whether the circumstances under which it was then recited first rendered it popular, one thing is certain, that in early times it constantly bore the title of the *Anthem of Puy*, and that it formed the favorite invocation of Our Lady in use among the first Crusaders.

The *Salve Regina* is not the only devotion to Our Lady connected with the history of the First Crusade. At the Council of Clermont Urban II. enjoined on the clergy the recitation of the Little Office of Our Lady, to invoke her protection on the Christian arms. Peter the Hermit introduced the recitation of the chaplet among the soldiers of his army, as a substitute for this office, and the custom of ringing a bell in the middle of the day to assemble them for this purpose is supposed to have been the first origin of the mid-day Angelus.

I shall say nothing of the other Popes who have visited Puy, or of the kings who have paid their vows here and thought it an honour to sit among her canons, and, clad in surplice and amice, to chant vespers in the apse of the angels. Some ascended the holy mountain barefoot in the garb of simple pilgrims, as Charles VII. and Louis XI., others like Francis I. came hither surrounded by a brilliant court, so that their pilgrimage became a pageant. And some, like René of Anjou, added a more religious character to the pageantry, by bringing with them a train of converts to the Christian faith; René's retinue including a company of several hundred Moorish knights, all converts from Islam, who had vowed a pilgrimage of gratitude to Our Lady of Puy. But it is necessary to speak a little more particularly of one royal pilgrim, to whom Puy stood indebted for the miraculous image of Our Lady which for many centuries was the object of extraordinary devotion, not only in France, but we may say throughout all Europe. It was brought from the Holy Land and deposited in the basilica

in the year 1254, by St. Louis himself, who at the same time presented to the church a thorn from the holy crown. The image, which was of great antiquity, was carved in very hard cedar wood, and represented the Blessed Virgin seated, and holding the Divine Child on her knees. It was first carried in procession, by way of solemn thanksgiving for the safe return of its royal donor, on which occasion such immense crowds assembled in the steep and narrow streets that serious accidents occurred, and some persons were even crushed to death. In consequence of this disaster the holy image was very rarely afterwards carried in public, and only on extraordinary occasions. At such times the ceremony was performed with the greatest splendour. Four nobles of the highest rank were chosen to carry the image, and four others, styled the Barons of Our Lady, held the canopy. These processions were made to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin when the country was afflicted by famine, pestilence, or war. Thus, in the fifteenth century, when the greater part of France was occupied by the English, Notre Dame de Puy was carried in the midst of a crowd which, says the chronicler Médecis, 'wept hot tears,' and besought the intercession of Mary for their afflicted land. On another similar occasion, he says, 'the people wept marvellously.' All these processions, he adds, 'were very holy and devout. The people put their souls in a good state, almost all were well shriven, and had received the Holy Body of the Lord. And they walked weeping hot tears with a lamentable vociferation, and calling on God and Our Lady for mercy.'

Nor did they call in vain; the deliverance of France from the English invaders, the cessation of many plagues, the birth of Charles VIII., the release of Francis I., as well as the pacification of the country after the long civil wars of the League were all regarded by the votaries of Puy as graces obtained in answer to these prayers. Their confidence in the protection of Our Lady knew no bounds; Puy was 'the city of Mary;' and it was the proud boast of her citizens that she had never opened her gates to a conqueror. Again and again the Huguenots laid siege to the place, but whether they had recourse to stratagem or violence, their efforts were equally

frustrated. The people of Puy commemorated their repeated triumphs by engraving on one of the pillars of their cathedral the following verse:—

Civitas nunquam vincitur
Nec vincetur: sic igitur
Per Mariam protegitur
Hæc privilegiata.

A graphic pen would, indeed, be required to describe the scenes which this old cathedral has witnessed during the thirteen centuries of its glorious past. Here in 1399; a strange procession might have been seen approaching, headed by a hundred penitents, walking two and two, and clothed in rough sackcloth. Then comes a Dominican friar who is about to preach; but no church will contain a tenth part of the immense multitude that is gathered to listen to St. Vincent Ferrer. A temporary amphitheatre has to be formed in the immense meadow called Le Breuil, which then included all the ground now covered by the prefecture, the courts of justice, the museum, and the public promenade. A temporary altar was erected, and whilst the saint prepared to offer the holy sacrifice, the penitents bared their shoulders, and in the sight of all the people scourged themselves to blood, calling on all sinners who loved God and hated sin to follow their example, and displaying a banner representing in a terrific manner the flagellation of Our Divine Lord. The fervid compunction of those believing multitudes manifested itself in groans and cries and torrents of tears, and when Mass was ended and the apostle began his preaching, prodigies of penance were witnessed; and this continued for fifteen days, during which time the saint's voice never once grew weak or exhausted, but made itself heard to the outermost rank of his vast audience.

The enthusiasm with which the pilgrimage of Puy was regarded by Catholics of all countries rather increased than abated with time. Pilgrims came from Spain, from Greece, and from Poland. New hospitals had to be built for their reception, and new roads opened for their convenience; which, however, did not suffice to convey the thousands who, at the approach of all the great festivals, took their way towards

Puy Notre Dame. They came over the fields and the hills ; in the depth of winter, they were often to be seen walking barefoot the greater part of the way ; and when from the neighbouring heights they caught a first sight of the Angelic Sanctuary, they would fall on their knees in the midst of the ice and snow and kiss the consecrated soil.

There was one occasion of rare occurrence, when these pilgrimages became even yet more numerous : it was at the time of the great Puy jubilee. This was a privilege granted in very early times by the Holy See, and enjoyed by no other church in Christendom, in virtue of which a plenary indulgence could be gained in the church whenever the feast of the Annunciation fell upon Good Friday. The first of these jubilees of which we have any account took place in 1407, and both then, and in 1418, several persons lost their lives in the immense crowd that choked up both the church and the streets, and the same thing happened in 1502, when although the general jubilee of the year 1500 had so lately closed, it seemed, says one writer, as if every country in Europe was precipitating its inhabitants on Puy. The bishop had provided three thousand confessors for the service of the pilgrims, but it was found necessary to send in all directions in order to collect another thousand, and the multitude confessed themselves not only in the church, but in the porches, the streets, the great meadow, and the churchyard. The streets were so full of people, says the historian, that if you dropt anything you could not stoop to pick it up. The air became so hot, that people poured water from the windows of the houses on those below in order to cool them, and members of the same family in order not to lose each other in the crowd, carried long sticks with ribbons of variegated colours which might be seen overhead. In 1622, to prevent the risk of accidents, Gregory XV. prolonged the time of gaining the jubilee until the following Friday, in hopes the numbers would be lessened by being spread over an entire week, but the only effect of this change was to increase the numbers who availed themselves of the privilege, and that year 300,000 pilgrims visited the cathedral. In 1785 took place the last of these jubilees which the eighteenth century was

destined to witness ; the great revolution followed, which, among its other acts of sacrilege, did not spare the sanctuary of Puy. The miraculous image, the gift of St. Louis and the object of devout veneration to so many millions, was dragged through the streets and ignominiously burnt in the Place du Martouret, and fifty-seven years passed before the disturbances of the times permitted the revival of the pilgrimage. When at last, in 1842, a jubilee of Notre Dame de Puy was again announced, few persons expected that the scenes of former days could possibly be renewed. In the first place, the jubilees of the Church had become more frequent, and the gaining of plenary indulgences no longer involved the painful and difficult exercises of ancient times. The ancient image had disappeared, and was only replaced by a faithful copy, and more than all, the faith of the multitudes had, it was believed, grown cold, and a generation had passed away since Puy had last seen her streets thronged with pious pilgrims ; whilst the new one had sprung up and grown to manhood during half a century of atheism, rationalism, and religious indifference. Yet in spite of all these arguments, 150,000 pilgrims presented themselves that year, and in 1853, although the Holy See had quite recently granted two general jubilees to all the faithful, the jubilee of Puy equalled anything that had been witnessed in the past. The season was unusually severe, the roads were choked up with snow ; but over snow and ice 300,000 pilgrims made their way, many finding no home in which to lodge, and being content to pass the nights praying in the churches ; and to the confusion of the enemies of the faith never had there been witnessed a larger number of conversions, more fervent communions, more edifying signs of faith and piety. The old ceremonies too, with a very few modifications, were revived. On Passion Sunday took place the great procession intended to call down the blessing of God on the ensuing jubilee. On the Wednesday in Holy Week, the image of Our Lady was removed from its ordinary resting-place, and placed in a conspicuous place under a rich canopy, and on this occasion the barons of Notre Dame appeared in their former place guarding the holy image with their drawn swords ; and the following day

an enormous and brilliant procession passed through the streets, and returned to the gilded gate of the cathedral, which being thrice struck by the bishop was thrown open to the chant of the *Jubilate*, and the jubilee began.

It remains to notice the very remarkable monument erected at Puy in our own time to the honour of the Blessed Virgin. We have already spoken of the Cornelian Rock, or the Rocher Corneille, on which, according to ancient legend, appeared the miraculous snow. Mgr. de Morlhon, the Bishop of Puy, who presided at the jubilee of 1853, conceived the idea of making this rock the pedestal on which should be raised a colossal image of the Mother of God. The rock itself stands 757 mètres, or 2,460 feet, above the level of the sea. On such a pedestal, therefore, the image of the Mother of God might be said to overlook the whole of France, the country long since consecrated to her by one of her old line of princes, and which the crimes of later generations have not succeeded in tearing from her protection. It was a noble design and one worthily executed. The first stone of the pedestal which was to be fixed on the top of the rock was, by the judicious arrangement of the Bishop, to have been laid on the very day when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed by Pius IX., but circumstances having deferred the ceremony two days, the work was commenced on the 10th of December, 1854. Then came the war in the Crimea, and the idea was suggested by Marshal Pelissier of applying to the Emperor for some of the cannon taken from the Russians, as forming a fit material for the statue of Our Lady of France. Mgr. de Morlhon summoned courage to make the request on the 5th of September, 1855; three days later Sebastopol was in the hands of the allies, and the cannon taken by the French were in the following April granted to the Bishop of Puy by an imperial ordinance. The image was not completed and placed on its pedestal till 1860; when twelve bishops and an immense throng of clergy and the faithful attended at the ceremony which inaugurated Notre Dame de France. The statue is described as a fine work of art, and measures with its pedestal twenty-three mètres, or about seventy-six feet. It represents the Blessed Virgin, crushing the serpent's head under her

foot, while in her arms she bears the Divine Child, whose hand is raised as if in the act of blessing France, and by an episcopal ordinance the anniversary of its erection is to be kept in perpetuity on the first Sunday after the 12th of September.

4.—Our Lady of Chartres.

IN some of the foregoing sketches we have had to claim for the French sanctuaries of Our Lady an antiquity which will doubtless provoke a contemptuous smile from readers of a critical temper. The bare notion of images of the Blessed Virgin having been brought into France, and churches built in her honour, by the immediate followers of the Apostles appears to many minds not merely legendary but apocryphal; yet in the history of the church of Chartres we are presented with a greater wonder still, for that venerable city claims pre-eminence among all those which boast of their ancient devotion to Mary from the fact of its having been the seat of a religious worship, which we may say was directed to her even before her birth. This statement, which at first sight appears preposterous, bears, nevertheless, more substantial appearance of probability than many of the legends hitherto quoted. Chartres, as we learn from Cæsar, was the great seat of Druidical worship in Gaul. The Druid priests held their principal assemblies in its neighbourhood, *in finibus Carnutum*, and their supreme chief always resided here. The Druids, as is well known, performed their religious ceremonies, not in temples, but in woods, and one of these sacred woods covered the little hill now occupied by the cathedral of Chartres. In this wood was a cave or grotto, where, according to ancient tradition, an altar was erected to the *Virgo paritura*, the Virgin who was to bring forth, to whom moreover the king and his people solemnly consecrated themselves. This tradition loses all character of improbability when we remember that the mystery to which it alludes was to be found in the religious belief of most pagan nations of antiquity. It formed, in fact, a portion of that primitive tradition which however much corrupted and overlaid by fables

had never been entirely effaced. Traces of it are to be found in the mythologies of the Latins, the Chaldeans, the Persians, and the Egyptians; but in the religious system of the Druids the belief in this mystery was given a peculiar prominence, and far from there being anything uncommon in the erection of such an altar as that of Chartres, we are assured by more than one author that they were of frequent occurrence not only in Gaul, but also in Germany and England.

Whatever may have been the source whence the Druids obtained this fragment of primeval truth, it cannot be doubted that the possession of it prepared them in some sort for receiving the doctrine of the Incarnation when first preached to them by Christian apostles. Hence, when St. Polentianus and St. Savinianus arrived in the territory of Chartres they found the minds of the inhabitants readily disposed to accept the preaching of the gospel. As St. Paul appealed to the altar erected by the Athenians to the unknown God, when declaring to them Him whom up to that time they had ignorantly worshipped, so now the Christian missionaries found willing hearers when they announced themselves servants of Him who had truly been born of the Virgin they had so long by anticipation revered. And on the conversion of the Chartrains nothing could be more natural than that their ancient grotto should be transformed into a Christian temple dedicated in honour of the true Mother of God.* Nor can it be said that these facts rest only on tradition. The grotto still forms the crypt of the present cathedral, and has been religiously preserved through all the reconstructions of the edifice; and up to the disastrous period of the revolution the ancient Druidical statue was venerated there, forming one of the greatest treasures of the city whether we regard it from a religious or merely from an antiquarian point of view. It was

* Even this title is said to have been not unknown to the Druids. Guibert de Nogent tells us in his memoirs that the church of his monastery was said to have been erected on the site of one of the sacred woods of the Druid priests, where they had been used to sacrifice to *the Mother of the God who was to be born—Matri futuræ DEI nascituri.*—Guib. ‘de Vitâ suâ,’ lib. ii. c. i.

most unhappily destroyed by the worse than Vandals who at that time busied themselves in profaning every sacred monument; but a very exact description of it has been preserved, from which we learn that it was carved in wood, and (as it would seem) out of the trunk of a tree; that it was black with extreme age, and that it represented the Virgin sitting in a chair and holding her Divine Child on her knee.

It was in 1020 that the celebrated Bishop Fulbert of Chartres first formed the design of replacing the simple wooden church erected over the sacred grotto in primitive times, by a more solid structure. The cathedral begun by him was, however, destroyed by fire while still incomplete, and the whole work had to be recommenced in the reign of Philip Augustus. The extraordinary scenes which then took place have been recorded by contemporary writers, such as Hugh, Archbishop of Rouen, whose letter to the Bishop of Amiens is still preserved, wherein he speaks of those marvels, the rumour of which has spread into all parts, and inspired the populations of other dioceses with similar zeal. 'It was at Chartres,' he says, 'that men were first seen humbly dragging carts and other conveyances to help in the construction of a church, their humility being rewarded with miracles.' He goes on to relate that his own people having visited Chartres and beheld what was done there returned to Rouen, determined not to be outstripped in devotion by their neighbours; and having resolved to admit none into their society save those who had confessed their sins, and were living at peace with their neighbours, they elected one of their number as chief, and under his direction undertook the restoration of their cathedral church, harnessing themselves like dumb animals to heavy carts, imposing on themselves severe privations, and performing all their labours in silence and tears.

Robert du Mont speaks in like manner of the spectacle first witnessed at Chartres where women as well as men were to be seen labouring like beasts of burden. 'He who has not beheld these things,' he says, 'will never see their equal. . . . Everywhere there is penance, humility, and forgiveness of injuries; men and women dragging themselves on their knees through mud and marsh, beating their breasts, and calling on

heaven, in the midst of innumerable miracles that elicit songs of thanksgiving.' But the most striking description is that given by Haymon, Abbot of St. Pierre-sur-Dives, who wrote a history of the miracles performed through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin in 1140, in which he relates the scenes of which he had been an eyewitness during the construction of his own abbey church, on which occasion thousands both of men and women emulated the example of the people of Chartres, coming from great distances, across mountains and even rivers, harnessed to their wagons, everywhere preserving perfect order, singing canticles in admirable concert, or imploring the mercy of God on their sins.

The dedication of the cathedral of Chartres took place in 1260, in the presence of the good St. Louis, who at his own expense erected the southern porch. This venerable structure, recently restored, is admitted to be one of the grandest ecclesiastical monuments existing in France; nevertheless, it owes its celebrity far less to the beauty of its architecture than to the sacred relics which have for centuries attracted the devotion of the faithful. Of these the Druidical statue, or *Notre Dame de Sous-Terre*, was formerly the most renowned. The massive crypt erected by Fulbert was not destroyed with the rest of his building; and in constructing it he was careful not to disturb the ancient grotto and its image, in order, as one writer expresses it, 'not to dry up a fount of grace.' In course of time the piety of the faithful enriched this grotto with every kind of ornament, and in the seventeenth century its walls blazed with gold and precious marbles lighted up by innumerable lamps, which burnt day and night before the sacred image.

Another image stood in the upper church known as Our Lady of the Pillar, which was saved from destruction at the time of the revolutionary troubles and has been recently restored to its former place; but the third and most precious of the Chartres treasures was the relic known as Our Lady's veil, which was long preserved at Constantinople, and is supposed to have been presented to Charlemagne by the Empress Irene, and afterwards to have been brought from Aix-la-Chapelle to Chartres by his grandson, Charles the Bald.

This relic, folded in another silken veil, was formerly kept in a cedar reliquary, adorned with gold and jewels, which was never opened, and the reliquary itself was only exposed for veneration on extraordinary occasions.

The people therefore formed their own ideas as to the nature of the relic, which commonly went by the name of '*la chemise de Notre Dame*,' and the custom was introduced of fashioning garments supposed to resemble in form the veil so religiously preserved, which were laid on the reliquary and afterwards sold to pious pilgrims. Nobody ever thought of visiting Chartres without bringing away one of the '*chemisettes de Notre Dame*.' They were supposed to afford an excellent defence in battle, and among other brave knights who were proud to wear them, was the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, who came to Chartres, says his biographer, '*pour se faire enchemiser de la chemisette de Notre Dame*.' Even in 1712, when in consequence of the decay of the cedar-wood reliquary, it became necessary to transfer the holy relic to a silver case, this appears to have been done without any examination of the relic itself, which was not taken out of its silken covering.

In 1793, however, that which had for nine centuries been an object of such pious veneration fell into the hands of the revolutionary government. Some of their commissaries were despatched to Chartres in the December of that year, who, entering the sacristy of the cathedral, insisted on having the case containing Our Lady's veil given up to them. When however they found themselves in presence of it, they were seized with a certain involuntary sentiment of fear, and strange to say, they shrank from laying their own hands on the relic and decided that the case should be opened by a priest. When this was done, and the veil was withdrawn from its covering it was found to be wholly unlike what they had expected to see. In the hopes of proving the falsehood of the tradition attached to it, by exposing the popular delusion as to its form and character, the commissaries cut off a considerable portion and sent it to the celebrated Oriental scholar, the Abbé Barthélemy, whose learning had been respected by the revolutionists themselves, and had recently procured his release from

prison, after he had narrowly escaped becoming a victim of the September massacres. The Abbé was not informed whence the fragment had been obtained ; but after a careful scientific examination, he replied that it was of great antiquity and probably as much as two thousand years old, and that it appeared to have formed part of a veil or external wrapper, covering the head and entire person, *similar to those still worn by women in the East*. This decision, procured by those whose object it had been to destroy all popular faith in the genuine character of the relic, was the greatest confirmation of its authenticity that could have been given, and the commissaries thought it wise to proceed no further. They left the veil in its case, contenting themselves with plundering the sanctuary of all its treasure, and causing the Druidical image to be publicly burnt before the west door of the cathedral. Occasion was unfortunately taken of the opening of the reliquary to cut up the precious veil, and distribute its fragments in various quarters. A large portion found its way into Brittany, where it is now preserved in the church of St. Anne of Auray. Other smaller fragments were carried by missionary and emigrant priests into Canada and England. On the re-establishment of religion, however, Mgr. de Labersac, Bishop of Chartres, caused all the pieces he could collect to be carefully authenticated and deposited in a new silver reliquary, which in 1822 was restored to the cathedral treasury.

It need hardly be said that the sanctuary which possessed so many memorials of the devotion to Our Lady has always been regarded with special veneration. The number of graces granted within its walls have formed the subject of histories both in prose and verse, and few cities have boasted with better cause than Chartres of the singular protection afforded them by their heavenly patroness. Thus in 911 when the city was besieged by the Normans under their chief Rollo, and on the point of falling into their hands, we read that the Bishop of Chartres advanced into the midst of the combatants carrying the sacred veil, and that at his approach the Normans fled, being seized with a sudden panic. A little chapel may still be seen erected at the time on the spot where this occurrence took place. It stands in a ravine near the city which

received the name of *Val-Rollon*, now corrupted into *Vauroux*, and the meadows through which the Norman chief beat his retreat were designated the *Prés des reculés*.

A still more celebrated event was the deliverance of the city from the army of Edward III., who was encamped outside the walls in 1360, when the people having solemnly invoked the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, that tremendous tempest broke out so graphically described by Froissart, wherein a thousand men-at-arms and six thousand horses were killed by monstrous hail-stones. Then it was that Edward falling on his knees stretched out his arms in the direction of the cathedral, and in his turn implored the aid of Our Lady of Chartres, vowing if his army were spared, that he would grant peace to France. Hardly was his vow pronounced than the storm abated, and in fulfilment of his promise, the king soon after signed the treaty known as the Great Peace of Bretigny.

Two centuries later, in 1568, a Huguenot army was at the gates of Chartres, headed by the Prince of Condé, who had been proclaimed king by the insurgent heretics. The citizens in preparing for the defence had placed over each of their gates a statue of the Blessed Virgin, bearing the inscription : '*Carnutum tutela.*' One of these statues appeared over the *Porte Drouaire*, and against it the Huguenots directed a furious cannonade, which broke down the whole of the surrounding walls, but left the image itself untouched. The besieged defended themselves gallantly, and one piece of artillery which had been taken from the Protestants at the battle of Dreux, and which bore in consequence the title of *the Huguenot*, did such good service on this occasion that it was afterwards rechristened *the good Catholic*. The assailants however succeeded in effecting a breach between the *Porte Drouaire* and the River Eure, and the citizens believing all human chance of escape was over, betook themselves in crowds to the subterranean grotto, to implore the protection of Notre Dame de Chartres. Wonderful to relate, at the very moment when their victory seemed secure, the besieging army withdrew from the open breach, and raised the siege. Chartres was once more delivered, and not by the force of arms ; and in commemoration of this event an inscription was put up still

to be seen in the public library ; a little chapel being also erected on that part of the wall which had been destroyed by the artillery of the enemy, bearing the title of Notre Dame de la Brèche.*

The pilgrimages to Notre Dame de Chartres were in old time so numerously attended, and especially on the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity, that it is said the city could not afford shelter to one half the pilgrims, multitudes of whom spent the night in the cathedral. The sensible inclination of the floor of the nave from the choir towards the door is attributed to the constant influx of worshippers, and their vigils in the church not being very conducive to the cleanliness of the building, it was found necessary to flood the pavement every morning before the celebration of Mass ; a cistern being constructed close by for this purpose, the old pipe of which has recently been discovered.

The reader will perhaps smile at this last illustration of the devotion exhibited towards this ancient sanctuary, and take it as a proof that the pilgrims to Chartres in former times presented that combination of dirt and piety which is no uncommon spectacle in Catholic churches. In other words, the sanctuary of Chartres was beloved and resorted to by the poor, and within its walls they truly felt themselves at home. But if this were true, it is no less certain that the list of her pilgrims includes likewise the most illustrious names of Europe :—three popes, almost every one of the kings of France, several even of those of England, our own saintly primates St. Anselm and St. Thomas, as well as St. Bernard, St. Vincent of Paul, and St. Francis of Sales, and lastly, among the queens of France, the beautiful and unfortunate Mary Stuart. Visitors of this class enriched the church with their splendid *ex-voto* offerings, the inventory of which, in 1682, filled a quarto volume of 170 pages. There you might see the silver sceptre of John II., the golden image of the Blessed Virgin offered by his namesake, John Duke of Berry, the magnificent cross blazing with emeralds and rubies

* An annual procession was made to this chapel, which in 1789 was sold and demolished. It was however rebuilt in 1844, and the annual procession of gratitude has been restored.

presented by Henry III., and the rich reliquaries and other gifts offered by Henry IV., who chose that the ceremony of his coronation should take place within this cathedral.

But all these treasures disappeared in the pillage which took place during the revolutionary crisis, and even after the restoration of religion the cathedral continued to bear lamentable traces of the desecrations then perpetrated. It has been reserved to our own days to witness the noble efforts of the Bishop of Chartres, assisted by the pious devotion of his flock, exerted in restoring the venerable sanctuary to something of its former grandeur, the thirteen chapels of the cathedral raised from their ruins, the grand old crypt cleared out, and again thronged by pilgrims to the subterranean grotto, whilst Our Lady of the Pillar fills her old place in the upper church, and daily beholds at her feet a crowd of pious worshippers.

Among those whose prayers and example have done much to effect this striking revival of faith in the hearts of the people, must be numbered the venerable prelate, Monseigneur Clausel de Montals, late Bishop of Chartres. On first coming into the diocese, he engaged himself by vow to spend half an hour every Saturday in prayer before Our Lady of the Pillar, and during the whole of his long episcopate he was never known to fail in accomplishing his promise. Neither extreme old age nor painful infirmities sufficed as an excuse for his absenting himself, and when at last obliged to resign his episcopal charge, he failed not in his act of resignation to express his desire of being suffered to die 'at the foot of those towers which crown the Sanctuary of Our Lady.' His wish was almost literally accomplished, for, on the 3rd of January, 1857, finding himself too feeble to make his way to the cathedral on foot, he caused himself to be carried thither by his attendants to make what proved to be his farewell visit to his favourite sanctuary, and on the following day he happily expired at the age of 88.

5.—Our Lady of La Salette.

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years ago the name of La Salette was unknown, save only to the inhabitants of its immediate vicinity. It is a small village, near Corps, in the southern part of Dauphiné, consisting of eight or ten hamlets scattered about, at no great distance from one another, in different nooks and corners among the roots of the French Alps, which rise rapidly, and in some places almost precipitously, behind them. The chief of these hamlets, where the church is situated, and which gives its name to the whole parish, is not less than 3700 feet above the level of the sea. The population, about 800 souls, are poor and simple, principally small farmers, with their families and dependents. Late on the evening of Saturday, the 19th of September, 1846, two children, servants of two of these farmers, returned from the mountain where they had been engaged all day in keeping cows, and told their masters a very wonderful story. The eldest of the children was a girl of fifteen years of age, who had been out at service ever since she was nine or ten years old, and had been with her present master for the last six months. The other child was a boy of eleven, who was quite a stranger in the village, having been brought from the town of Corps, a distance of four or five miles, only on the previous Monday, as a temporary substitute for a cowherd that was ill. These two children, then, told the following tale:—They said that about midday they had driven their cows, according to their usual practice, to a certain rivulet to drink; that they had at the same time consumed the store of provisions which had been given them when they left home in the morning, and that after wandering about a little, they lay down on the grass and fell asleep near a fountain which was at that time dry; that the girl, Françoise-Mélanie Mathieu, was the first to awake, and seeing that the cows had strayed, she immediately awoke her companion, Pierre-Maximin Giraud; that they went together to look for their cattle, and from the brow of the hill soon discovered

where they were ; but before going to reclaim them and drive them to their proper pastures, they turned back to the place where they had slept to fetch their empty provision-bags ; that their eyes were at once arrested by the appearance of a very extraordinary brilliance, dazzling as the sun, yet not of the same colour ; and that presently this light appeared to open, and they distinguished within it, the form of a lady yet more brilliant. She was sitting on the stones at the head of the dry fountain, in an attitude of the most profound grief.

She was clothed in a white robe studded with pearls, and a gold-coloured apron ; white shoes, and roses of every variety of colour about her feet ; a wreath of roses around her head-dress, which was a high cap and slightly bent in front ; upon her breast was a crucifix, suspended by a small chain from her neck ; on the left of the crucifix, was a hammer, and on the right the pincers ; another and larger chain encircled all these instruments of the Passion, and this again was within a still larger wreath of roses. Such at least was the description of the costume as given at the time by the children themselves ; but, as Maximin now very justly observes, ‘ How could ignorant children, called upon to describe such extraordinary things, have been able to find fitting expressions, when the best-educated persons sometimes fail in finding them to depict mere ordinary objects ? When called upon to describe what I saw, I feel something of the same embarrassment which St. Paul must have felt when he returned from the third heaven, for the eye of man hath not seen, nor his ear heard, what it was then given to us to see and hear. Let not people therefore be astonished if what we called a cap, a crown, a handkerchief, chains, roses, an apron, stockings, buckles and shoes, had scarcely the real form of these objects. In that beautiful dress, there was nothing earthly ; rays of light and a variety of hues combined to produce a magnificent whole, which we only diminish and materialise by attempting to describe.’

When the lady stood upright, she was of a tall and majestic appearance,—so tall, Mélanie told us, that she had never seen any one of equal height ; the children, however, were unable to gaze steadfastly upon her countenance because of its

brightness. At first her elbows rested on her knees, and her face was buried in her hands, whilst tears flowed copiously from her eyes. The girl was frightened, and dropped her stick; but the boy bade her pick it up again, adding that he should take care of his, for that if *it* (meaning the figure which they saw) offered to do them any harm, he would give it a good blow. Then they heard a most sweet and gentle voice, bidding them not to be afraid but come forward, for that she had great news to tell them. The voice sounded as of one speaking close to their ears, though the figure was seen at the distance of nearly thirty yards. It at once dispelled all their fears, they ran towards her as to a loving mother, of whose good-will they were well assured. The lady herself arose and advanced to meet them, not seeming however to tread upon the earth as she went, but to be raised a few inches above it. Presently she stood between them, and addressed the following words to them, weeping as she spoke: 'If my people will not submit themselves, I must let the hand of my Son fall upon them; it is so strong, so heavy, that I can keep it up no longer. How long a time have I suffered for you! If I wish my Son not to abandon you, I am obliged to pray to Him without ceasing; and yet you pay no regard to all this. However much you may pray, whatever you may do, yet you never can recompense all the trouble that I have taken in your behalf. I have given you six days to labour in, I have reserved the seventh for myself; yet they will not give it me. It is this which makes the hand of my Son so heavy. Wagoners cannot swear without introducing the name of my Son. These two things are what make the hand of my Son so heavy. If the harvest is spoilt, you yourselves are the only cause of it. I made you feel this last year in the potatoes, but you took no account of it; on the contrary, when you found the potatoes were spoiled, you swore, and you took the name of my Son in vain. They will go on as they have begun, and by Christmas there will be none left.'

Thus far the lady had spoken in French, and the girl had not understood what she was speaking of in this last sentence, because in the *patois* of that country potatoes are not called *pommes de terre*, but *truffes*. Mélanie therefore was going to

ask Maximin what was the meaning of this word, *pommes de terre*; but she had not yet spoken, and the lady knowing her thoughts, anticipated her words by saying, 'Ah, my children, you do not understand me, I will speak differently;' and she then went on to repeat the very same sentence—beginning with the words, 'If the harvest is spoilt,'—using the *patois* of the neighbourhood. This she also continued to use in the following: 'If you have corn, you must not sow it; all that you sow the beasts will eat; any that comes up will fall to powder when you thresh it. There will come a great famine; and before the famine the children under the age of seven years will be seized with a trembling, and will fall in the hands of those that hold them; the rest will do penance by the famine. The nuts will become bad, the grapes will rot; but if they be converted, the stones and the rocks will change into heaps of corn, and the potatoes shall be self-sown in the earth.'

Here the lady paused, and it seemed to Mélanie that she was speaking to the boy, but she heard nothing of what was said; then, in like manner, she spoke to Mélanie, and the boy saw that she was speaking, or seeming to speak, but could not hear what was said, or whether anything was really being said at all. Only afterwards, when the vision had disappeared, the children spoke to one another about this mysterious silence, and each declared to the other that the lady had at this juncture confided to them a secret, which they were on no account to reveal to any one until the time came for so doing. Neither knew anything about the secret of the other, whether it was the same as his own or different.

The lady then resumed her discourse to the two children together, asking, in the *patois* of the country, 'Do you say your prayers well, my children?' 'Not very well, ma'am.' The lady replied, 'Take care always to say your prayers, my children, every night and morning. When you can do nothing else, say only a *Pater* and an *Ave Maria*; but when you have time say more. Only a few old women go to Mass, the others work on Sundays during the summer; and in the winter, when they know not what to do, the youths go to Mass only to make a mockery of religion. In Lent they go to the shambles

like dogs. Did you ever see corn that was spoiled, my child ?' Maximin answered, 'No, ma'am.' Mélanie too gave the same answer, but in a gentle tone, for she was not sure whether or not the question had been addressed to her as well as to her companion. The lady then spoke to Maximin, and said, 'You have seen it, my child, once when you were with your father at Coin. The owner of a piece of ground there told your father to go and see his wheat that was spoilt. You went, both of you, and you took two or three ears of corn in your hands; you rubbed them, and they crumbled into dust. Then you went home; and whilst you were about half an hour's walk from Corps, your father gave you a piece of bread, and said, "Take this, my child, let us eat it this year whilst we can get it; I don't know who will be able to eat any next year, if the wheat goes on like that."' Maximin answered, 'Oh, yes, ma'am, I remember now: just now I had forgotten all about it.'

Then the lady spoke once more in French, and said, 'Well, my children, you will cause this to be told to all my people;' and with these words, she passed on before the children and crossed the rivulet, and ascended the short but steep side of the opposite slope; then she repeated the very same words; and again she walked forward to the spot where the children had gone when they were in quest of the cattle.

'Motionless as statues,' we quote the words of Maximin himself as he published them two years ago, 'our eyes fixed on the beautiful lady, we saw her, with feet close together like those of a person skating, gliding over the top of the grass without causing it to bend. When we had recovered from our rapture, we ran after her and soon overtook her. Mélanie placed herself in front, and I behind, a little to the right. There, in our presence, she rose gradually, visible for some minutes between heaven and earth, at the height of two or three feet; then her head, her body, and her feet became lost in the light which surrounded her. We could see nothing but a globe of fire rising and penetrating the firmament. In our simple language we called this globe a second sun. Our eyes remained long fixed on the spot where the luminous globe had disappeared. I cannot describe the ecstasy in which we

found ourselves. I speak only of myself; I know very well that my whole being was overpowered; I was as it were paralysed. When we came to ourselves again, we looked at one another without being able to utter a single word, sometimes raising our eyes towards heaven, sometimes looking on the ground around us. We seemed to be seeking the resplendent figure which however I have never since beheld. . . . My companion was the first to break silence, and said, 'It must be the good God, Memin, or my father's Blessed Virgin, or perhaps some great saint.' 'Ah,' I replied, 'if I had known that, I would certainly have asked her to take me back with her to heaven.'

It was now time to think of descending from the mountain; the children called together their cows, and returned (*rêveurs et pensifs*, says Maximin) to the village. There they first met the mistress of Mélanie, to whom Maximin began to talk of the beautiful lady they had seen, 'My expressions,' he says, 'of a lady in fire, a second sun, &c., made her think that I was gone mad. Nevertheless she begged me to tell her all that I had seen and heard, and she was much astonished at the recital. I in my turn was amazed that she had not seen as well as I this brilliant light placed on the top of the mountain, and consequently visible, as I supposed, to a very great distance. I could not imagine that I had received a special grace.' Then Maximin alone went on to the farm to which he belonged, and as soon as his master came home he communicated to him the same story.

The strange news soon spread among the neighbours, but was not believed. Early the next morning, the master of the boy, who had promised to take him back to Corps on that day, brought both the children to the parish priest. He was a very simple-hearted old man; and after having listened to the tale, and questioned and cross-questioned the narrators, he was so impressed with their truthfulness, that he repeated a good deal of the history to his parishioners in the middle of that day's Mass; an irregular and rash act, for which he was afterwards reprimanded and removed. He was so much affected in reciting the story, that those who had heard nothing of it before scarcely knew what he was speaking about. However, as soon as Mass was ended, they lost no time in

informing themselves, and all crowded round the children to hear it from their own lips. Our readers may easily imagine the cross-examination to which they were subjected. Still nobody could succeed in shaking their testimony ; they steadily persisted in repeating the same thing over and over again to all inquirers, answered all their questions with a readiness and simplicity truly surprising, and disposed of all their objections with the ease and ingenuity of the most practised advocates ; in a word, though their evidence stood alone and unsupported, yet it was impossible to throw discredit upon it by any contradictions or inconsistencies in their manner of giving it. The girl was now sent by her master to drive the cows to the mountain as usual. It was a long and tedious ascent, and not one of the neighbours had the curiosity to accompany her ; they did not yet believe the story they had heard ; the pilgrimage to La Salette had not begun. After vespers (our readers will not have forgotten that it was Sunday), eight or ten people went up, and these were the first pilgrims, led rather by curiosity than by faith ; and they made Mélanie tell her story again, and point out the precise spots where everything was said to have happened. On her return in the evening, the mayor of the village came and questioned her ; he questioned the boy also in a separate apartment ; he then brought them face to face, and gravely told them that what they had been saying was clearly a lie, and that God would punish them very severely if they persisted in repeating it. He exhorted them therefore to confess the imposture, and promised to shield them from all punishment. His eloquence was entirely thrown away ; the children said they must do as 'the lady' had told them and proclaim the fact. Next he offered them money, about 2*l.*, to bribe them into silence ; it was in vain ; and lastly he threatened them with imprisonment and other punishments ; but this too was equally inefficacious, and the worthy magistrate returned to his home baffled and perplexed, and perhaps half disposed to be convinced. At a later hour of the day, the boy was taken back to his parents at Corps according to agreement ; and this was of course a means of spreading the marvellous story throughout a wider circle ; or rather, there became two centres, as it

were, from whence it radiated throughout the neighbouring towns and villages, the boy at Corps and the girl at La Salette. Of those who heard the story, some shook their heads and laughed, and whispered something about priestcraft, ignorance, and superstition; but others, on the contrary, turned it over in their minds, and thought it would be well to go and examine the witnesses for themselves, to confront them with one another and with the scene of the supposed vision. Of those who adopted this latter course, many returned quite satisfied and convinced; and all acknowledged that they certainly were unable to detect the fraud and imposture, if fraud and imposture there were. There was nothing perhaps, either in hearing the story again from the lips of its original narrators, or in seeing the places where it was alleged to have happened, that was calculated in itself to enforce conviction upon an unwilling mind; only the most incredulous were obliged to confess, that if the story was really false, it was strange they could not succeed in detecting the falsehood in any of the multiplied examinations, conducted with more than judicial severity, to which these young and ignorant children had been subjected. Daily experience shows us how the most plausible tale is often made to break down, or at least to *seem* to break down, under the pressure of some skilful cross-examination; but in this instance there was nothing of the kind; the witnesses could not be brow-beaten; the story kept its ground. And this was a great step. A consistent story, however strange, if it be continually repeated and insisted upon, gradually gains belief; it perplexes and annoys those who would fain disbelieve it, but it slowly gains the assent of the indifferent and unprejudiced. And it was so here. Persons, priding themselves upon their prudence perhaps, again and again made offers to the children of large sums of money if only they would hold their tongues and say no more about it; but their answer was uniformly the same, viz., that they had been specially charged by 'the lady' to cause it to be told to all the people, and that they must obey this command. Still, it must not be thought that they went about in an excited gossiping way, neglecting their daily duties, and taking upon themselves the office of itinerant preachers; far from it: they

remained steadily in their former humble occupations, the girl continuing in the same service at La Salette, and the boy living at Corps with his parents; only they always repeated the history to those who asked for it, and answered the objections of those who tried to gainsay their testimony, and pointed out the precise spot where it all happened to those who sought their company for that purpose.

We must not omit to mention another circumstance also which tended greatly to give credibility to the children's words, viz. that an intermittent fountain at the spot where this 'lady' first appeared, and which on that day and for some time previously had undoubtedly been dry, was found to be flowing copiously on the following morning, and had never since ceased; nor has it ceased up to the present day, though previously to the apparition it flowed only at rare intervals, after a heavy fall of rain or the melting of snow upon the mountains.

So much, then, for the original story of the children, and their steadfastness in maintaining it. Let us next enquire how this story was received by the authorities of the Church. Did they encourage or discountenance it? or did they observe a strict neutrality?

Many of the parish priests in the neighbourhood wrote to consult the Bishop (of Grenoble) as to what they ought to do and say under the circumstances; and these inquiries soon became so general, that on the 9th of October, that is, within three weeks after the story had first been heard of, his lordship addressed the following circular to his clergy:

Monsieur le Curé,—You have no doubt heard of the extraordinary facts which are said to have taken place in the parish of La Salette, near Corps. I beg you will refer to the Synodical Statutes which I gave to my diocese in the year 1829. You will find there, at page 94: 'We prohibit, under pain of excommunication to be incurred *ipso facto*, the declaration, printing, or publication of any new miracle, under any pretext of notoriety whatsoever, excepting only the authority of the Holy See or our own, after a severe and careful examination.' Whereas, therefore, we have not yet pronounced upon the facts above referred to, both duty and prudence prescribe to you the greatest possible reserve concerning them, and above all, an absolute silence about them in the pulpit.

Notwithstanding this, certain persons have ventured to issue a lithograph print of the scene, to which are appended some verses. I have to announce to you, Monsieur le Curé, that this publication has not only not received any approbation from me, but that it has much annoyed me, and that I have formally and severely reprovéd it. You will be cautious, therefore, and both set an example of prudent reserve in your own conduct and also recommend the same to others.

Accept, Monsieur le Curé, the assurance of my sincere and tender regard.



PHILIBERT, *Bishop of Grenoble.*

By Order,

CHAMARD, *Honorary Canon, Sec.*

But whilst the Bishop was thus enforcing a wise caution on his clergy, he was far from being an unconcerned spectator of what was going on. He had already removed the parish priest of La Salette to another cure, and substituted a priest brought from a distance; he now required all the clergy of the neighbourhood and of his own episcopal city, and all others whom he knew to be travelling in that direction, to institute the most careful inquiries upon the spot, and to communicate the result to him without delay. He studied with great diligence the mass of documents which were thus forwarded to him; and in consequence of what he learned in this way, he appointed two commissions early in December to draw up a report for him, and to advise him whether or not he should pronounce any decision on what was said to have happened. One of these commissions consisted of the chapter of his cathedral, the other of the professors in the ecclesiastical college of the diocese. On December 15, these reports were presented, and they were perfectly unanimous in the advice which they gave; advice characterised by that extreme caution and prudence which are so uniformly found in ecclesiastical decisions on matters of this kind, but the very reverse of which Protestants, in their ignorance, habitually attribute to them. Both the canons and the professors advised his lordship to abstain from giving any decision whatever: he could not, they said, give an unfavourable decision, for the whole affair was *très plausible*, and such as they should certainly be disposed to believe at once if it were only an ordinary and natural event that was being called in question; and moreover, it had

produced none but purely beneficial effects ; it had excited the devotion of the people, and made them more exact in the performance of their religious duties ; it had entirely removed in the neighbourhood where it had happened the faults complained of—the swearing, the desecration of the Sunday, &c. &c. The Bishop could not therefore declare the story to be false, and prohibit all belief in it. On the other hand, it rested on the authority of two children, who might *possibly* be either deceiving or deceived ; and the personage who was supposed to have appeared to them had not required them to communicate it to the ecclesiastical authorities ; there was no *obligation* therefore on the part of the Bishop to give any judgment at all ; and considering that all eyes were upon him, and what a serious thing it was to pronounce in such a matter, they counselled a complete silence, ‘ to leave those who were satisfied with the sufficiency of the proofs that could be alleged, free to believe it, yet not to censure those who, from a contrary motive, refused or withheld their belief. If this event comes from God, and it is God’s will that the authorities should interfere in the matter, He will manifest his will more clearly and positively. Then it will be quite time enough for the authorities to break silence ; there is no necessity to do so at present ; there is no danger in delaying ; it is more prudent, therefore to wait.’ Such was the language of the Bishop’s advisers, and it is language which will commend itself to every sober right-judging man. There is something in it eminently practical, which the English mind is singularly calculated to appreciate ; and we will venture to say that it is as far as possible from what any of our Protestant readers would have expected.

Matters remained in this state for a considerable time ; that is to say, there was no official interference on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, either in the way of encouragement or otherwise, for a period of six or seven months. But meanwhile the story spread far and wide, and found many to credit it ; laymen, priests, and even bishops, came from a distance, examined for themselves, returned home, and sometimes published an account of their visit, uniformly pronouncing themselves in favour of the reality of the apparition. Rumours of

miraculous cures wrought at the fountain, or elsewhere, upon persons drinking of the water of the fountain and calling upon the intercession of Our Lady of La Salette, grew and multiplied. Pilgrims from various parts of France and Italy, and even from Spain and from Germany, began to arrive in large numbers. The affair was growing serious; it arrested the attention of the government, at that time by no means inclined to look favourably upon anything that savoured of religious devotion and enthusiasm. People, it was said, ought not to be allowed to flock together in this way in an obscure corner of the kingdom. What was this secret? these prophecies of famine and distress coming upon the land? There might be some political mystery at the bottom of it; it might be intended to take advantage of the superstition of the people to devise some plot, or to create some disturbance of the peace; any how it was a matter that should be looked into, and if necessary, be put down. Accordingly, on May 22, 1847, the children were summoned by order of the higher authorities, before the *juge de paix*, or justice of the peace, for Corps, assisted by the recorder or registrar of the same district. They were examined both separately and together; and after a solemn warning from the magistrates to declare the whole truth and nothing but the truth, they each repeated, almost word for word, the narrative which has been already given. In forwarding the depositions to the attorney-general, which was done on the following day, the examining magistrate enclosed a private note, saying that the children had given their evidence very much as if they were reciting a lesson; but he added, 'this is not to be wondered at; for they have repeated it so often, and to such a number of persons, that they have naturally acquired this habit.' He further added, that he could vouch for the identity of their present narrative with that which they gave at the very first to their masters; at least he had been assured of this identity by the testimony of one of the masters themselves, who had committed the whole story to writing the very day after he first heard it, and whose MS. is still extant.

Two months later, July 19, the Bishop of Grenoble again appointed a commission, with authority to institute the most

rigid examination, and to collect all possible information upon the subject, both as regarded the history of the event itself, and also the authenticity of any miracles which professed to have been wrought in connexion with it. This commission consisted of sixteen ecclesiastics of the highest repute in the diocese for learning and piety; the two vicars-general, eight canons, the superior of the seminary, and five parish priests. Two or three of these set out about ten days afterwards on a tour of inquiry, which they prosecuted with great diligence throughout the neighbouring dioceses of Valence, Viviers, Avignon, Nîmes, Montpellier, Marseilles, Fréjus, Digne, and Gap. On August 25, they arrived at Corps and examined the children; and the next day they ascended the mountain in their company, and in the company of some thirty or forty other persons, ecclesiastics and others. Having thus done all that it was possible to do in the way of preliminary investigation, having collected a good deal of very important documentary evidence properly attested, the members of the episcopal commission were summoned for their first formal session on November 8. The Bishop himself presided on the occasion; the proceedings were opened with a solemn invocation of the Holy Ghost, and other prayers; a form of devotion was prescribed for the daily use of all the commissioners during the progress of the inquiry; a plan of operations was laid down according to which the inquiry should be conducted; and this was the whole of the first day's business. On November 15, they met again to examine witnesses; first, the curé of Corps, then the boy Maximin. The next day they examined the girl, and also the Reverend Mother Superioress of a religious community, in whose schools both the children had been taught (reading and writing, and their religion, for they had been grossly ignorant) ever since the Christmas after the apparition; and on the third day they examined both the children together. On all these occasions the ingenuity of the examiners was racked to the very utmost to discover questions that should perplex and expose the children; there were those upon the bench who by no means wished the weight of episcopal sanction to be given to the marvellous narrative which the children told, and who therefore suggested doubts and

difficulties, and proposed questions which they themselves thought quite unanswerable. But their labour was all in vain ; and at the end of the third day they had made no progress whatever towards invalidating the testimony of these dull, uneducated peasants. The acuteness of some of their answers (specimens shall be given hereafter), the simplicity of others, and the unhesitating boldness of all, proved to be more than a match for all the captious objections and subtle refinements of the most practised logicians. The fifth conference was held on November 22, and the subject discussed was the nature of probability and of moral certainty, the number of witnesses necessary to authenticate a fact, &c., &c. ; and at the end of this session a certain portion of the report was read and adopted. The next two sessions, November 29 and December 6, were devoted to the examination of documents sent from other dioceses relative to certain miracles alleged to have been wrought upon persons drinking the water of the fountain of La Salette, and joining in certain devotional exercises addressed to our Blessed Lady under this new title. In the first of these sessions, two miracles were admitted as proved according to the strictest rules laid down by theologians in this matter ; and in the second, one only was admitted. The eighth and last session was held on December 13 ; in it divers objections and difficulties were started and solved, the remainder of the report was adopted, and the Bishop declared the conferences to be now closed ; he thanked the members of the commission for their assiduous attendance, and dismissed them, saying that he reserved to himself the right of pronouncing his solemn judgment upon the matter that had been under discussion, at such time as he should deem most suitable.

Such is the history of the committee of inquiry, as we may call it, that was instituted by the Bishop of Grenoble to investigate the extraordinary story circulated by the two children ; and we think most unprejudiced persons will consider that for sober, straightforward, and business-like order of proceeding it will not suffer by comparison with any of our ecclesiastical courts, any committee of our House of Commons, or in fact any other of the judicial or semi-judicial tribunals of our country. The report was ordered to be printed, to-

gether with the *pièces justificatives*, as they are called—that is, the documents on which certain portions of it were grounded; and the work would have appeared immediately, but for the revolution which broke out so unexpectedly on the 24th of February, 1848. It was scarcely to be expected that amid the general excitement and confusion which was the consequence of that event, amid the distress and misery which were the necessary results of so sudden an overthrow of public credit and paralysis of all the usual branches of commerce and industry, the report of an ecclesiastical committee should arrest the public attention. In the middle of June, however, the Bishop ordered it to be published, and, in the letter of approbation which he caused to be prefixed to it, he declared his conviction that it would be found to be useful to persons of all classes; for ‘it will tend to dissipate,’ he says, ‘many erroneous opinions that have gained possession of the public mind. Those who believe the story, those who doubt, and those who disbelieve it, will all read the work with interest, and, we hope, not without profit. Pious persons who have believed it will see that by so doing they have not incurred the reproach of imprudence and weak-mindedness. Those who have thought it safer to suspend their judgment will certainly be struck by the many and strong arguments by which the fact is supported. And lastly, those whose prejudices are such that they at once declare to be false whatever is uncommon and marvellous, will yet remember that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction, and that an event whose fame has filled the whole Catholic world for the last twenty months, and has set in motion more than a hundred thousand pilgrims, does not deserve to be rejected without examination.’ The extreme moderation of this language of the venerable Bishop must strike even the most prejudiced reader with astonishment, if not with admiration. The story of the two children had now stood the test of public criticism for nearly two years; they had been examined and re-examined during this period both by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, as also by hundreds upon hundreds of private individuals, both lay and clerical, both well-disposed and ill-disposed towards the reception of their tale, and yet they had never been

detected in a contradiction or an inconsistency ; they had been subjected to every kind of treatment that the most determined resolution and the most experienced ingenuity could devise, to force or to wheedle them into a betrayal of their alleged secret, yet not the faintest whisper had escaped them which could furnish even so much as a clue to its probable nature and subject ; they had become objects of interest to hundreds of thousands, and their society had been sought by some of the best and wisest of the land, yet they had not profited by these circumstances to enrich their families, neither did it seem to have in any way injured their natural humility and modesty of character ; pilgrims had come from the north and the south, from the east and from the west, and had carried off with them of the waters of La Salette as a precious treasure, and then there were borne back to the infant sanctuary from the four winds of heaven rumours upon rumours, or rather proofs upon proofs, and well-authenticated proofs, of miraculous cures and other supernatural favours, both temporal and spiritual, obtained through the medium of this new apparition ; men of prudence and of learning had come from afar to inquire and to satisfy themselves by a rigorous examination upon the spot, and had gone away saying, ‘It cannot be but that the finger of God is here ;’ * in a word, the seal of truth had been as it were visibly set upon the whole narrative both by the voice of God and of man, yet the Bishop does but allow and encourage the publication of the report ; he abstains from issuing any authoritative decision, and chooses rather to leave all the subjects of his diocese free to canvass the facts, and, if they will, to deny and to ridicule them. Certainly one would have thought that the prudence and moderation of this judgment had scarcely deserved to be branded with the note of ‘gross credulity and grovelling superstition.’

But to proceed with our narrative. The report was received with the greatest eagerness on all sides ; several thousands of copies were sold in a few months, for it was the first official and really authentic document that had appeared upon the subject, and all knew that it could be depended upon. The

* See the letter of Mgr. Dupanloup, written on June 11, 1848, and published in the ‘*Ami de la Religion*,’ 7 avril, 1849.

concourse of pilgrims continued to increase, and was only suspended during the winter months, when the snow and ice rendered the mountain inaccessible. Several bishops wrote to the author of the report, or to the Bishop, to express the satisfaction with which they had read it, and their own intimate conviction of the truth of the children's story; and the general opinion of the public expressed itself more and more strongly in the same sense. In the end of December 1849, the Bishop authorised the publication of a supplement to the official report, consisting chiefly of facts and documents connected with the authentication of new miracles that had been wrought in various dioceses of France upon persons using the water of La Salette, and invoking Our Lady's help. In publishing these documents, the Bishop expressed his conviction that they would go far towards removing any doubts and prejudices that might yet remain in the minds of any against the truth of the apparition; that they would cause the indifferent to reflect, and confirm the faithful in their devotion. Still he pronounced no judgment; he did not attempt to interfere with the belief of others.

One feature in the case yet remained which might seem to afford a convenient shelter for doubt and suspicion. 'Nothing can be easier,' it was objected, 'than for the children to say that they have been entrusted with a very precious secret; but as long as they steadily refuse to communicate to any man living what that secret is, we are at liberty to doubt whether they really have any secret at all; we have no proof of it, and therefore we shall disbelieve it.' When our readers come to learn by and by the strength of the temptations by which the children were tried upon this head, and consider the facility (on the supposition that the children are impostors, which, of course, is what these objectors professed to believe) of *inventing* a secret, they will estimate this argument at its true value. However, the pastoral solicitude of the Bishop of Grenoble was not satisfied until he had removed even this stumbling-block from the way of the weakest members of his flock. Accordingly, early in the month of July, 1851, the aged prelate sent for the two children, and explained to them that all visions and revelations and supernatural events of whatever

kind that happen in the Church ought to be fully and completely submitted to the holy Pontiff; that as head of the Church and Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth, it belonged to him to judge in these matters; he therefore required them, under obedience to his authority, to commit to writing the secret which they said Our Blessed Lady had confided to them, and he on his part would charge himself with the responsibility of sending the letters by faithful messengers to Rome. As soon as the children were satisfied by the Bishop's arguments that it was their duty to obey him in this matter, they sat down at different tables, and wrote their respective letters without the smallest hesitation, and exactly as if they had been copying what they wrote from some original before them. They signed and sealed their letters, and the Bishop entrusted them to the vicar-general of his diocese and another priest to carry to Rome. On the 18th of the same month these precious missives were placed in the hands of the Holy Father by the persons we have named. His Holiness immediately read them in the presence of the messengers, but, of course, without communicating to them any of their contents: he said he must read them again at his leisure, and then added, 'These are scourges for France, but Germany and Italy, and many other countries, deserve the same;' and he went on to assure the Abbé Rousselot that his books (the Report and its supplement, already mentioned) had been examined by the Promoter of the Faith, and were approved of. Thus fell to the ground the last reasonable excuse for doubt. The secret which these two poor ignorant children had professed to be entrusted with, and which for five years they had so jealously and so successfully guarded against the pertinacious efforts of thousands of curious inquirers, was no fiction, but a reality; a reality sufficient to engage and to satisfy the mind of the holy Pontiff, and therefore more than sufficient to assure all reasonable men that at least it was no idle invention of the children themselves.

At length, therefore, on September 19, 1851, the fifth anniversary of the apparition, after so many years of careful and patient investigation, the Bishop issued a formal authoritative

decision, and in a pastoral letter* solemnly declared the apparition to be a certain and unquestionable fact. He begins this letter by explaining and justifying his long delay, which arose, he says, from no indifference or slowness of heart to believe, but simply from that prudence and circumspection which is so necessary a part of the episcopal character. He knew, on the one hand, that any hasty decision in such a matter would scandalise both weak Catholics and avowed unbelievers; and on the other, that no real harm could arise from a cautious delay, 'since the religion of Jesus Christ has no need of this particular fact to establish the truth of a thousand other heavenly apparitions in times past, recorded in Holy Scripture.' Although personally, therefore, his own conviction of the truth of the children's narrative was complete at the end of the examination that was conducted in his presence in the months of November and December 1847, still he had been unwilling to press it upon the acceptance of others who might think differently about it. Since that time he had redoubled his prayers to the Holy Spirit that his mind might be illuminated, and that he might be guided aright; he had scrupulously studied and followed all the rules laid down by holy doctors of the Church as necessary to be observed in affairs of this kind, and was ready to submit and correct his judgment, if the See of Peter, the mother and mistress of all churches, should declare herself in a contrary sense. 'Wherefore,' he continues, 'considering, in the first place, that we are wholly unable to explain the fact of La Salette in any other way than as an act of the direct interference of Almighty God, whether we look at it in itself, in its circumstances, or in its object, which is essentially religious; considering, in the second place, that the marvellous consequences which have flowed from this fact are the testimony of God himself, given by means of miracles, and that this testimony is superior alike to the testimony and to the objections of mere men; considering that either of these reasons taken alone, and still more both together, ought to override all doubt and utterly destroy any weight which might at first sight seem to attach to the

* The original may be seen in the 'Manuel du Pèlerin à Notre Dame de Salette,' par M. l'Abbé Rousselot, p. 29. Grenoble, Baratier, 1852.

difficulties and objections which have been raised against it ; considering, lastly, that a spirit of docility and submissiveness to the warnings of Heaven may preserve us, perhaps, from those new chastisements with which we are threatened, whilst contrariwise a prolonged resistance may expose us to fresh and irremediable evils : At the express demand of all the members of our venerable chapter, and of a very large majority of the priests of our diocese, as also to satisfy the just desires of a large number of pious souls, both at home and abroad, who would otherwise, perhaps, accuse us of hiding and imprisoning the truth, Having called upon the Holy Spirit and implored the assistance of the pure and spotless Virgin, We decree as follows : ' namely, what has been already mentioned—that the apparition of La Salette is a true and certain fact, which none of the clergy or faithful of the diocese are hereafter at liberty publicly to contradict or call in question ; that it may be preached and commented upon in the pulpit, but that no prayers or hymns, or other books of devotion connected with it, may be printed without the episcopal approbation, given in writing ; and that a church and house of refuge for pilgrims shall be immediately begun on the site of the apparition, for which purpose alms are solicited from all the faithful.

This pastoral was followed by another on the 1st of May in the next year, a few extracts from which will serve better than any words of our own as a commentary upon the last. After speaking of the high privilege he had enjoyed in being the chosen instrument to proclaim the truth of an apparition of the Blessed Virgin, a privilege and a duty of which he was *obliged* to avail himself under pain of a blameworthy resistance to the voice of God and to the unanimous desire of the faithful, the Bishop continues : ' Our *mandement* of September 19 has been received with universal satisfaction ; for, in truth, public opinion had anticipated our decision, and the formal decree which we issued did but give that sanction which was wanting to make it a full and complete certainty. We have received numerous congratulations, expressions of agreement with our decision, gifts, and promises of assistance from divers princes of the Church and a large number of our venerable colleagues.

. . . It could not be otherwise, my brethren ; for it was not without a purpose that the Mother of Mercy condescended to visit the children of men. . . . Words descended from on high must needs spread far and wide, and be heard by all nations. Look back at the origin of this great event ; see its obscure birth, its rapid diffusion first throughout France and the whole of Europe, then to the four quarters of the world, and, finally, its arrival in the capital of Christendom. To God alone be the honour and glory ! We have only been a feeble instrument of his adorable will. It is to the august Virgin of La Salette that this prodigious and most unexpected result must be attributed ; she alone has made the necessary disposition of things to bring it about—she alone has triumphed over all obstacles, solved all objections, annihilated all difficulties—she alone has prepared all that has yet happened—she alone will put the final crown upon her own work.’

He then goes on to announce the arrangements he has made for laying the foundation-stone and blessing the new church, as also for establishing a body of clergy to be called Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, who shall reside on the mountain during that part of the year when it can be frequented by pilgrims, and during the winter months shall be employed in preaching missions and retreats in different parts of the diocese.

The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone was fixed for the 25th of this same month, the month of Mary, and the Bishop was assisted in it by one of his colleagues, the Bishop of Valence. More than 3,000 persons received holy communion at the various Masses which were celebrated on the top of the mountain on this occasion, and 15,000 pilgrims assisted at the high Mass, sermon, and benediction.

Thus the pilgrimage of La Salette, whose first feeble beginnings may be said to date almost from the very day after the original announcement of the apparition, but which had grown so rapidly that not less than 60,000 pilgrims were assembled on occasion of the first anniversary, was now finally and authoritatively established, and from that day forward its celebrity has been more and more confirmed. Between thirty and forty thousand pilgrims visit the shrine annually, among

whom are more than 700 priests, who come to celebrate the holy sacrifice on so favoured a spot. More than 300 chapels or churches, and a countless number of altars, have been dedicated throughout the Christian world under the title of Our Lady of La Salette; 330 confraternities are associated to the archconfraternity established on the mountain; and the annals of the sanctuary, published every month by the missionaries, are distributed to six or seven thousand subscribers in every part of the globe. Henceforth, La Salette has taken its place among the most famous of Our Lady's sanctuaries, and as long as the world shall last it will never cease to be an object of the deepest interest and a place of frequent pilgrimage to the pious servants of Mary. Other such places in various parts of the world are venerable with the traditions of fifteen or sixteen centuries; but it is scarcely possible that there should be ever one whose claims upon our devotion can be more thoroughly and satisfactorily sifted than that whose history has now been given. We have traced its early beginnings and marked every stage in its progress, from the episcopal letter of October 9, 1846, enjoining upon the clergy 'an absolute silence' upon this matter in the pulpit, down to the second letter from the same Bishop, dated September 19, 1851, in which he not only allows the whole story to be preached and published, but also peremptorily forbids any of the clergy to contradict it; and we need not hesitate to assert that the history which we have given proves at least as much as this, viz. that there was no carelessness or precipitancy on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities concerned, but, on the contrary, the utmost deliberation and prudence; and that no attempt was made to stifle inquiry and opposition until the experience of five years had demonstrated the futility of all objections that could be raised. It may still be asked, however, whether the evidence to which the Bishop and the committee of his appointment ultimately yielded was such as would command the assent of all reasonable men, or whether they allowed themselves too easily to be persuaded by the plausible tale of the children and the credulity of those around them. In other words, we have to inquire what grounds they had for believing in the reality of the alleged apparition; and

in particular, how the state of the evidence in its favour in 1851 differed from what it had been in 1846. To answer this question fully would involve a complete analysis of the evidence given before the two commissions, together with some account of the numerous independent witnesses, or, as they might more properly be termed, self-appointed commissioners, who had at various times during the interval subjected the whole history and the persons concerned in it to the most critical examination; and although this is quite beyond our present purpose, yet we cannot omit some summary at least of the principal points of proof.

First, then, let us say something about the children, whose tale, first told on the evening of September 19, 1846, was the beginning of the whole history. Born of parents in the very poorest class, and in a part of the country where the people were at that time notorious for inattention to their religious duties, they had been brought up in the grossest ignorance, both secular and religious. The girl was nearly fifteen years of age; but having been at service ever since she was nine or ten, and having been made by her masters to work on Sundays and holydays almost as constantly as during the week, she had a most imperfect knowledge of the doctrines of the Christian faith; she could not repeat two lines of catechism, and had not been admitted, therefore, to make her first communion with the other children of her age. She was naturally timid, careless, idle, and disobedient; her memory and intellectual capabilities were so feeble that, even after the apparition, after having been taught to repeat twice every day for a twelvemonth the Acts of faith, hope, and charity, she could not be trusted to recite them correctly by herself; matters which many of the children in our poor schools, of the age of seven or eight, or even less, would recite with the utmost facility. She was afterwards for six years under the care of the Sisters of Providence, and the training which she received during this period of course considerably strengthened and improved her mental faculties; we were told, however, by the chaplain of the convent where we saw her as a novice in 1852, that they were still certainly below the average. This fact was not apparent in the course of the conversation

which we had with her ourselves, for we talked only about the history of the apparition ; and upon this subject, as we shall presently have occasion to observe, both the children have always displayed a degree of sharpness and ability altogether beyond their natural powers. Her singular simplicity and modesty of manners was very prepossessing, and the ready straightforwardness of her replies seemed to us thoroughly incompatible with all idea of cunning and deceit. The Bishop of Birmingham, who saw her two years later in the same convent, says that he found 'her demeanour singularly modest and recollected, and her manner simple and religious. . . . I put a series of questions, which she answered with calmness, but with readiness.'* She did not persevere in the community of the Sisters of Providence, but removed to the much stricter order of Mount Carmel, and 'is at this moment,' writes one of the missionaries of La Salette in a private letter addressed to ourselves on September 25, 1867, 'at Castellamare, near Naples, where she is gone this year to assist in a religious foundation, of which the mother house is at Marseilles.'

The boy Maximin we have never seen ; but the same venerable authority whom we just now quoted writes that 'his general appearance is frank, and he prepossessed me favourably. His manner is free and easy, but still rustic. He answers readily when questioned, but his hands are restlessly employed about his knees. His voice has an independent drawl in it, and he has not an atom of mere human respect in his composition. All reports agree that he has made but a very poor way in learning, for he is both slow in mind, heedless, and volatile.' The farmer for whom he was keeping cows at the time of the apparition described him to the commission of enquiry as 'an innocent, without malice and without foresight.' His father testified that it had been a work of three or four years to teach him the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* ; and when he was taken into the school of the Sisters of Providence, at the age of eleven years, a twelvemonth's instruction was not sufficient to enable him to serve Mass. His indolence too, and love of play, retarded the progress of his studies almost more than any natural deficiency of mental

* 'The Holy Mountain of La Salette,' by a Pilgrim of the year 1854.

powers. When once he had begun to learn, he was very anxious to become an ecclesiastic, and means were afforded him to gratify this desire; as far, at least, as man *can* help him—that is, as far as his education is concerned. He was sent to the seminary of Grenoble, but after a sufficient trial was rejected as seemingly incapable of steady persevering application; and ten years afterwards we find him serving the Church in a way better suited to his capacity, as a Pontifical Zouave. These, then, are the children who, on the evening of September 19, 1846, came down from the mountain, and told the wonderful story which we have narrated; and we think we need not say another word to show that they were at least incapable of *inventing* such a story. Had the message which they professed to have received, and to be commissioned to deliver to the people, been short and simple—had it consisted of a single sentence—or had it confined itself to a mere general exhortation to greater strictness and holiness of life, and a general denouncement of evils to come if the people did not repent, the case would have been very different. In this case, though it might have been difficult to have conceived any adequate motive that could have induced the children to invent such a tale, still it would not have been a self-evident absurdity to suggest the suspicion. But now, looking at the message as it really stands, considering its length, the minuteness of its announcements, the boldness and accuracy of its predictions, and the whole character of the language in which it is couched, every one can see at once that the idea of two ignorant peasant children having been the authors of such a narrative is simply preposterous.

But if the story be not true, and if the children were not the authors of it, it must needs be either that they were the instruments and accomplices of the author, or else the victims of some extraordinary ocular or mental delusion. The refutation of this latter hypothesis may safely be left to the common sense of our readers; and the same may be said also of the idea suggested by the *Times*,* of a 'got-up apparition.' Had the scene of the plot been laid in some thick wood, and in 'the witching hour of night,' we might have thought

* See the '*Times*' of September 7 and October 26, 1852.

differently ; but a ' got-up apparition ' at noonday, when there was not a single cloud in the heavens, and on the summit of a bare mountain, where not a tree or a shrub is to be seen, is simply impossible. It remains, therefore, to enquire whether the children may not have been the conscious accomplices of some third party yet undiscovered ; for if the story be not true, this is the only explanation of the matter that deserves a moment's consideration. Yet that even this too is utterly inadmissible, it will not be difficult to demonstrate, by observing what has been the conduct of the children subsequently to their first announcement of the marvel.

It has been already mentioned that they were strangers to one another until the day before the alleged apparition ; the boy had only been in the village of La Salette for five days altogether, and both the place and the occupation being new to him, his master had felt himself obliged to accompany him every day, and to remain in his immediate neighbourhood at work, that so he might always have an eye upon him ; and he deposes that during the whole of this week the two children had not been in one another's company until the Friday. Then on the Sunday they were separated again ; the boy returned to Corps, the girl remained at La Salette ; and they never met, save only to be examined from time to time by some of the numerous visitors, until the following Christmas. At that time the girl was taken into a poor-school kept by some religious in Corps, and the boy frequented the same school as a day scholar. Strangers frequently came to interrogate the children, both separately and together ; and sometimes these strangers took the boy away with them for a day or two to go and point out the precise spot upon the mountain ; but it was never observed that on any of these occasions the children showed the slightest desire to come together after the examination was over, in order that they might ' compare notes ' as to the questions that had been asked and the answers given. On the contrary, it was notorious that they *never* sought one another's society at any time ; there was a perfect indifference between them ; neither cared to learn how or by whom the other had been examined ; nor did they ever make it a subject of conversation with their school-fellows. They

were always ready to see anybody who came to question them upon the subject, and their answers were always prompt to the inquiries that were put to them; but they neither talked of it unnecessarily to their companions, nor communicated to one another afterwards the result of the examination. They never seemed in the slightest degree anxious or oppressed, as with the consciousness of some great mystery in which they had a part to play; but the whole thing appeared to sit lightly and naturally upon them, like any other fact in their past history, which it was not necessary for them ever to speak about, but if interrogated upon, there was no reason why they should hesitate to answer; and in this free and unembarrassed way they have undergone the examination of thousands of curious and cunning inquirers, of priests and bishops, lawyers, magistrates and judges, during a period of several years, and yet have never been detected in any untruth or contradiction.

And here also seems the proper place to mention another feature in the conduct of the children which it would be hard to reconcile with the idea of their being parties to any fraud in the matter: we allude to the wonderful fidelity with which they kept the secret which they said had been entrusted to their charge. Our space will not allow us to enumerate all the various ways by which it has been attempted from time to time to extort from them, if not the secret itself which they had been forbidden to disclose, yet at least some petty circumstance connected with it, against which there was no such prohibition; as, for instance, whether it was of public or private concern, whether it was good news or bad, whether the time would ever come for revealing it, &c. &c. We will select, as a single specimen of what the children have had to undergo upon this head from a multitude of persons, the following account of the attempts that were made by Monsigneur Dupanloup, the distinguished Bishop of Orleans. It is taken from a letter addressed by himself to one of his private friends, on June 11, 1848. He says,

‘I cannot help seeing in the fidelity with which the children have kept their secret a strong token of their truth. Each has maintained, for the last two years, that he is in possession of a certain secret; yet neither pretends that he knows the other’s. Their parents, their

masters, their parish priests, their companions, thousands of pilgrims have questioned them on this subject; the most incredible efforts have been made to wrest from them some sort of revelation about it; but neither love nor money, neither promises nor threats, neither the civil authorities nor the ecclesiastical, have been able to make the slightest impression upon them in this matter; so that at this very day, after two years of continual efforts, nothing, *absolutely nothing*, is known about it. I myself made the most earnest endeavours to penetrate this secret; and certain accidental circumstances helped me to push my endeavours further than most others perhaps, and at one moment I really thought I was succeeding. . . . I am bound to confess, however, that all my efforts were perfectly fruitless; at the instant that I fancied I was compassing my end and going to obtain something, all my hopes vanished; all that I fondly imagined that I had got, suddenly escaped me, and one answer of the child plunged me again in all my former uncertainty.'

He then goes on to relate the different ways in which he tried to overcome the boy's constancy, and to wrest from him some portion of his secret. It happened that he had a little travelling-bag with him which opened by a secret spring, without any lock and key. The boy's curiosity was greatly excited by seeing this bag opened and shut in so mysterious a manner. He examined it in all directions; and not being able to discover the spring, he begged Monsigneur Dupanloup to show it him. The prelate agreed to do so, on condition that the child would, in like manner, reveal *his* secret. It was in vain that the boy pleaded the great difference there was between them; that there was a prohibition in the one case, and none in the other. The bishop—or professor rather, for he was not then raised to the see of Orleans—would hear of no other condition. Ten times in the day did the boy return to the charge, and always with the same result. The professor did all he could to excite his eager curiosity more and more, and then declared his willingness to satisfy it, if only he would tell him *something*, though it were ever so little, about this mysterious secret. But the moment the words of temptation were spoken, the boy's whole tone and manner were immediately changed; his curiosity seemed altogether to vanish, and he became grave and serious. At last, after the lapse of several hours, the professor relented, and showed him the

secret spring. But it was only to attack him by another weapon ; for he now appealed to his generosity. The boy seemed to feel the reproach, but was still silent ; ‘and I remained convinced,’ says M. Dupanloup, ‘as any one else would be who knows what human indiscretion is—and especially the indiscretion of children—that the lad had victoriously withstood one of the most violent moral temptations that can well be imagined.’ The professor, however, having come from a considerable distance, on purpose that he might thoroughly investigate this matter upon the spot, was not going to abandon his project because he had been twice or three times baffled. He reopened his attack, and in a more serious way. He tried what bribery would do. First he gave the boy himself some trifling presents of pictures, a new hat and a blouse ; and then he got him to talk about the poverty and distress of his father ; after which he proceeded to promise that his father should not be allowed to want for any thing, but should be enabled to live at home in ease and comfort all the rest of his days, if only the boy would tell him—not the whole secret, but only such portion as he *might* tell without breaking his promise. M. Dupanloup says that he inwardly reproached himself all the time for making the boy undergo such temptations ; what the inward feelings of the boy were we do not know ; we only know that he always simply and unhesitatingly answered, ‘No, sir, I cannot.’ Once more did this indefatigable tormentor renew his attack upon the child, and perhaps this last was the severest trial of all ; still it met with no better success than its predecessors. As he was packing up his baggage at the inn, he allowed the boy to meddle with every thing as though it had been his own. Amongst other things, he laid hold of M. Dupanloup’s purse, in which there happened to be a considerable sum of gold. Instantly he opened the purse, turned out its contents upon the table, and was soon absorbed in arranging and rearranging them in several little heaps. When M. Dupanloup saw that the child was thoroughly enchanted by the sight and handling of so much money, he told him with the utmost gravity, and really meaning what he said, that all this gold should be his, for his own use and that of his father, and that it should be given him

then and there upon the spot, if only he would consent to reveal what little he might feel himself at liberty to reveal about the secret entrusted to his charge. The result of this most trying temptation shall be told in M. Dupanloup's own words.

‘Then I witnessed a most singular moral phenomenon, which still strikes me with astonishment as I recount it to you. The child had been entirely absorbed by the gold; he was delighted to look at it, to handle and to count it. All on a sudden he became quite sad at hearing what I said, abruptly left the table where the temptation was before him and said, “Sir, I cannot.” “And yet,” said I, “there is money enough there to make both you and your father very comfortable.” Again his only reply was the same; “Sir, I cannot;” uttered in a tone so firm and simple that I felt I was vanquished. Unwilling to confess as much, however, I added in a tone of assumed displeasure, contempt, and irony, “Perhaps you won’t tell me your secret because you have none to tell; it’s all a mere joke.” He did not seem to be the least offended by these words, but answered briskly, “Oh, but I have though; only I can’t tell it.” “Why not? Who has forbidden you?” “The Holy Virgin.” Henceforth I gave up the useless contest. I felt that the dignity of the child was superior to my own. Placing my hand with respect and affection upon his head, I made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, and said, “Adieu, my child; I trust that the Blessed Virgin will excuse the solicitations I have addressed to you: be faithful all your life to the grace you have received:” and in a few minutes we parted to see each other no more. Whoever will well consider what the nature of children is,’ adds the bishop, ‘how light, and fickle, and unsteady, and talkative, and indiscreet, and curious they are, and then shall make the same experiments that I have made, will certainly share also in the astonishment which I have felt, and cannot fail to ask himself whether it is by the two children that he is being thus baffled, or whether it is not rather by some higher and divine power.’ *

The testimony of this distinguished ecclesiastic is so full and precise, and his observations upon it so clear and convincing, that we will not run the risk of weakening the impression it may have made upon our readers by adding another word upon this branch of our subject. We will pass

* The whole of this most interesting and important letter may be seen in ‘Some Account of the Apparition of La Salette.’ Burns and Lambert.

on at once to another kindred feature in the case, which in some respects perhaps is even yet more surprising. We have seen how, on all matters concerned with the miraculous story of 'the lady's' apparition, the moral character of the children has risen above itself, superior to the strongest and most trying temptations; we shall now see how, in their intellectual capacities also, they have manifested a similar superiority. On all other subjects they have always been slow, dull, and stupid; but upon this one subject of the apparition, their quickness and ingenuity has amazed and confounded their examiners; and yet without the children seeming to be the least elated by, or even conscious of, the triumph they had achieved. Their most brilliant and profound replies have been given with precisely the same natural ease and simplicity as other answers in no way surprising; and no one has ever seen so much as a smile upon their countenances, even when their victory has been most complete. A few specimens must suffice. Did one who had examined them profess to disbelieve the whole story, and to treat the children as wicked impostors? They answered with an air of the utmost unconcern, 'The lady charged us to repeat what she had said; she gave us no commission to make you believe it.' Did another taunt them as to the non-fulfilment of the threats which the lady had uttered? Immediately they replied, that that was no concern of theirs, but only of the lady who had spoken to them; or at another time they objected to the same taunt the fact of the people's repentance. When a priest asked them whether they were not tired of repeating the same tale over and over again day after day, the retort was instantly ready, 'And you, sir, are you tired of saying Mass every day?'—'The lady who taught you all that story on the mountain has been discovered, and she is now in prison at Grenoble,' was the abrupt announcement of a stranger to them one day; they only answered, 'He will be a clever fellow who catches her.'—'But the lady was no real person at all,' it was said on another occasion; 'your eyes were deceived; it was merely a bright luminous cloud which seemed to assume that shape.' 'But bright luminous clouds don't make long speeches.'—'I quite believe in the truth of all

you have told me,' was the apparently candid acknowledgment of a very clever ecclesiastic ; 'but it was not a messenger from heaven who spoke to you, but rather the Father of lies, disguised as an angel of light and seeking to sow disorder and falsehood in the Church.' 'But the devil would not be anxious to make us keep holy the Sunday, to behave well in church, and not to swear and bláspHEME ; besides, the devil would not carry a cross.'—'Why not ?' replied the priest ; 'we read in the Bible that he once carried our Lord Himself to Jerusalem and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and if he was able to do this with the living body of Christ, *à fortiori* he might well carry a mere image of Christ, a crucifix.' 'Nay,' said the child, 'but I am sure that God would never allow him to carry his cross like that.'—'But why not ?' insisted the priest, 'if he once carried Himself ?' '*Because by the cross He saved the world.*' When the other child, or the same child on another occasion, was pressed by the same difficulty, the answer was still more touching and more utterly beyond their age and natural capacities : 'Yes,' said the child, 'that may have happened when Our Lord was upon earth, *but He was not then glorified.*'

Let any one turn over these answers seriously in his mind, —and if we were not afraid of wearying our readers, we could fill our pages with many more such—let him consider the extraordinary simplicity, yet no less singular appositeness of some of them, the beauty and profound philosophy of others, and the thorough satisfactoriness of all ; and then let him ask himself whether it is within the range of human possibility that this should be the language of dull and ignorant children, who have been tutored to play a certain part in a public imposture ? Who could have foreseen these questions ? Who suggested these answers ? Even granting that it had been possible, by dint of most assiduous perseverance, so far to overcome the natural stupidity of these children, as that they should faithfully retain in their memory the very words of a long and difficult discourse—some of it spoken in a language they did not understand—and never vary in their repetition of it ; yet what merely human genius could have so thoroughly apprehended the whole compass of the objections

that might be raised against the narrative, as to have primed the children with answers to them all? and what merely human prudence could have sufficed so clearly to arrange these questions and answers, and so deeply to impress them upon the children's minds, as that they should never be at a loss, or confound one answer with another? These are considerations which it behoves those who scoff at the history of La Salette, and will not believe that the finger of God is there, seriously to examine and satisfactorily to explain. Let them not run off into idle declamations against priestcraft, prostration of intellect, superstition, and credulity; but let them deal soberly with the facts which have been adduced, and suggest some reasonable interpretation* of them other than that which we propose, viz. the truth of the apparition. We know, indeed, that there were once those upon earth to whom it had been expressly forbidden to 'take thought how or what to speak,' because it should be 'given them in that hour what to speak,' and we know that Almighty God might render the same supernatural assistance to any other persons whom from time to time He chose to accredit as his messengers. We know also that 'out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings He has perfected praise;' that He 'has chosen the foolish things of the world that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are.'† All this we know; and therefore, if it be allowed that the history which we have told is a true history, and that the apparition of our Blessed Lady to the children of La Salette was the act of Almighty God, every difficulty disappears. The event takes its place at once amongst a class and order of

* This is what they can never be brought to do. The 'Times' confined itself to the most general terms: 'monstrous imposture,' 'notorious falsehood,' 'grossest credulity and most grovelling superstition.' 'The Gentleman's Magazine' (January 1854) 'does not think it worth the trouble to endeavour to account for the story, but leaves it in the hands of its readers to settle it in their own way. Whether it be delusion, fraud, or both, is not a matter of much importance to determine.' *Ex uno disce omnes.*

† St. Matt. x. 19; Ps. viii. 3; 1 Cor. i. 27.

events where the incongruities we have pointed out are no incongruities at all, but in the strictest harmony with everything about them. Twelve poor ignorant fishermen confound the wisdom of philosophers, and convert the world; this is the type of God's dealings with mankind under the Christian dispensation; and it is a type with which, if we may be allowed to compare things of such unequal magnitude, the history now before us faithfully corresponds.

But that two dull and ignorant children should consistently maintain during a period of twenty years, in spite of all kinds of threats and promises, a lying tale of their own invention, or that had been taught them by another; that they should, during this same period, answer in the most unhesitating manner to every question that was proposed to them, upon the spur of the moment, and without the possibility of previous confederation, and yet that these answers should never be contradictory, and often most profound; that they should impose upon the public, both lay and clerical, and even upon the Sovereign Pontiff himself;—this is a phenomenon which certainly does *not* harmonise with the general history of the world around us. The history of the sanctuary of La Salette, taken in the order of things divine, is not extraordinary; taken as a merely human affair in which the finger of God has had no part, it is quite inexplicable.

We have dwelt at such length upon the internal evidence in favour of the story of the apparition of La Salette, to be derived either from an examination of the narrative itself, or from the conduct of the children towards it, or from any other of its own intrinsic circumstances, that we must pass over in a very hurried way such external evidence as can be adduced for it. It is briefly this; first, the new spring of water upon the mountain; secondly, the universal acceptance which the story has met with throughout the Christian world; and thirdly, the fact of many miracles having been wrought upon persons believing it and calling upon our Blessed Lady of La Salette for extraordinary help and assistance. The first of these facts cannot of course be anything more than an indirect confirmation of the story told by the children; but certainly

it is at least as much as this, and ought not therefore to be set aside as of no value. The children affirm that they saw a lady sitting on a particular spot, and that this lady communicated to them certain intelligence which they were to impart to the people. The people are attracted by curiosity to go and visit the spot, and they find that an abundant fountain of very pure water is flowing there, where on the day before there had been no water at all. And the whole population of the neighbourhood have now had the experience of twenty years, during the whole of which time they have observed that it has never ceased to flow; yet they knew that before the apparition it was a most irregular and intermittent stream. Here, then, is a plain sensible change in one of the phenomena of nature upon this mountain-top; and it falls in with, and to a certain degree corroborates, the children's story; and at least it certainly predisposes the minds of those to whose knowledge it has been brought, to accept a story which seems to account for the change and is otherwise well attested. Moreover, it is worth noticing that the children themselves made no mention of this 'miraculous fountain' as a part of their story. They are positive that there was no water there on the Saturday; they saw it flowing on the Sunday; but neither of them pretends to know when or how it began to flow.

But secondly, the story has met with universal acceptance; and this, again, is an argument in favour of its truth. The 'Times,' indeed, endeavours to throw ridicule upon this reasoning: 'Each pilgrim,' it says, 'is supposed to bear witness to the truth of the original story, by affording his presence in confirmation of the fact.' This of course is a gross misrepresentation of what has been urged by the advocates for the reality of the apparition; it is to have recourse to that dishonest argument known to our logical readers as the fallacy of Division and Composition. We say that the acceptance of the story by the whole Catholic world is an argument for its truth; but it suits the purpose of our adversaries to represent us as saying that its acceptance by each individual Catholic is *toties quoties* a separate and independent argument in its favour. The difference is palpable; and but few words are needed to show that the argument, as we have here stated it,

is sound and trustworthy. Every one who is familiar with works written upon the evidences of Christianity must have met with it again and again. It is a very common observation, and one that cannot be gainsayed, that the universal acceptance of the Gospel would be more extraordinary on the supposition of its falsehood than it is on the supposition of its truth; and the same may be said of the case before us. How did the tale of two peasant children command the assent and belief, first of those living upon the spot or in its neighbourhood, and then of the faithful generally throughout France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and other Catholic countries? How did their feeble voice suffice to bring together on the first anniversary of the apparition upwards of sixty thousand pilgrims from different parts of the earth? Their tale had been most rudely handled by those public journals which habitually laugh to scorn every thing that is religious; on the other hand, it had not yet been endorsed by the ecclesiastical authority; it stood therefore entirely upon its own merits; and nevertheless it was believed by hundreds and by thousands; and at this moment it has not only outlived all opposition, but it has won, not a mere unreasoning assent, but a most deep and hearty devotion from the great majority of the faithful. *Vox populi, vox Dei.*

The third and last point of external evidence which we mentioned was the evidence of miracles—that is, of miraculous cures that have been wrought in connection with a belief in this apparition, and as it would appear, in confirmation of that belief.

In the autumn of 1847 there was in Avallon, a town in the archdiocese of Sens, on the high road between Auxerre and Châlons-sur-Saône, a lady named Marie-Pierrette Gagniard, the greater part of whose life had been spent in continual suffering. She was then aged about thirty-two, and for the last seventeen years she had been always under medical care for very grave and acute maladies; indeed her maladies had been so bad that in one single year she had received the last sacraments three times. She had lost the use of her left eye ever since she was an infant, from an attack of small-pox; the eyelid was closed, and could with difficulty be made to open. On the 12th of July, 1845, she lost the sight of the other eye

also, and became totally blind, and the doctor attributed this misfortune to a cancer in the head. His own medical account of the matter stands thus : ' July 12, 1845. Sensation of some foreign substance in the right eye, and convulsive movements of the same, so that one could see nothing but the *sclerotica*. The following day the upper lid had fallen ; and from that time forward no efforts, however violent, could succeed in forcing it open further than to catch a glimpse of the eyeball, which seemed to be rolling about in a most frightful manner. As the other eye had been lost from her infancy, Pierrette Gagniard was now completely blind ; she could not even distinguish the day from the night.' Three months afterwards the whole of her left side was paralysed. In the month of April, 1847, there began a discharge (through the mouth) of very offensive matter, as from a purulent ulcer. This continued at intervals for a period of eight months, spite of the most energetic treatment by the medical men of the place. It was particularly bad on the 29th of November, 1847, and the doctor promised to come and bleed her the next morning. Some unexpected summons prevented him from keeping his engagement ; and when he came on the 1st of December, he found that it was no longer necessary ; the discharge had stopped suddenly on the previous day. His patient had heard of what was said to be the *miraculous* cure of a near neighbour of hers, who had suffered even more acutely than herself and for an equal length of time. It was told her that this lady had been suddenly and completely cured at the end of a novena, or nine days' prayer, to Our Lady of La Salette, with the use also of some of the water brought from that fountain. She was naturally anxious to have recourse to the same *Salus infirmorum* ; a good nun in the town who was in the frequent habit of visiting her, promised to bring some of the water every day, and it was agreed that the novena should end on the 8th of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was begun therefore on the 30th of November, and on that day, as we have seen, the discharge of matter entirely ceased. Her headaches, however, her blindness, her loathing of food, and all her other maladies continued with the same intensity until seven o'clock in the morning of the

8th of December, when she received the holy communion as she lay upon her sick bed. Within an hour afterwards, she fell into a sound sleep, such as she had not enjoyed before for many years, and she slept for three or four hours, until she was awoke by some one coming into her room. She now was conscious of the light, which had not been the case for more than two years before, and she shed abundant tears. Encouraged by these symptoms, she proceeded to get up, which she found she could do without difficulty or fatigue. Two or three hours later, the nun paid her daily visit, and pouring the few drops of water that remained upon a handkerchief, applied it to her eyes. Immediately she exclaimed that she saw the nun's crucifix, then that she saw her whole figure; and in another minute she was able to recognise every body in the room and all the neighbours who came crowding in to see her; and in the evening she read her prayer-book as easily as though she had never lost the use of this right eye at all.

These facts were solemnly attested both by the patient herself, by many of her relations, friends, and neighbours, and by the doctor who attended her; and the latter concludes his deposition with these words, 'It being impossible, as I believe, to explain these facts by the ordinary laws of science, *je ne crains pas de m'incliner devant ce qui est possible à Dieu.*' And you, reader, are you too of the same opinion? Is this the conclusion which you would have drawn from the same facts? are you, too, ready to bow before the hand of God, and to recognise in this cure no merely natural effect, no singular coincidence, no result of ordinary medical treatment, but the visible seal, as it were, of God's approbation of the supernatural means of remedy to which the sufferer had had recourse? You will have observed how the cessation of one of the patients' maladies synchronised with the commencement of her novena, and how the cessation of the rest crowned the conclusion of it; the final blessing of all, the restoration of her sight, followed immediately on the application of some of the water from La Salette. This happy synchronism, however, is far from being all that the Church requires, when she is called upon to take cognisance of matters of this kind with a view to pronouncing a judgment upon them; and the his-

tory we have narrated did *not* satisfy the severe scrutiny of the ecclesiastical authorities, and the Archbishop of Sens refused to pronounce it a certain miracle. Not that there was any doubt as to the authenticity of the facts; far from it; these were established beyond all possible cavil by abundant testimony, down to the most minute particulars, as they have been now described; but the Vicar-General of the diocese, who had been deputed to examine into the case, fancied that he could detect in these facts certain circumstances which caused them to fall short of what the holy jealousy of the Church requires before she pronounces a cure to be miraculous. He says, in his report addressed to the Archbishop: 'First, it is not proved to my satisfaction that Marie-Pierrette Gagniard was really what is properly called blind; secondly, I think one may explain her cure by natural means, without having recourse to the Divine interposition by a miracle.' The first of these observations he justifies by making a distinction between the loss of the *faculty* of seeing, and the mere loss of the *use* of sight; *e.g.* in many persons who are really blind the eyelids are open, and an unscientific observer does not recognise any fault in the outward appearance of the eye; but these persons have not the faculty or power of seeing; they are really blind; and to restore sight to such an one would be really miraculous. But there are others who still retain the power of seeing, yet are deprived of the present use of that power, owing to some injury that has been inflicted on the optic nerve, or some temporary or accidental derangement of the mechanism of the eye, such as (in the present instance) inability to raise the eyelids; when this temporary evil is removed, the patient recovers, *not* the power of seeing, which he had never lost, but only the use of his sight; and these cases are quite within the range of medical skill. Having established this distinction, he proceeds to give his reasons for considering that the recovery of this lady may have been brought about by merely natural means. We will not attempt to follow him through all the medical details of his report (for the whole discussion turns entirely upon these), but content ourselves with a very brief summary.

“This lady,” he says, “was considered by the doctor to have an abscess somewhere in her head; the natural end of every abscess is suppuration; such an end was attained in the present instance: when suppuration is complete, the inflammation diminishes, and by and by altogether ceases; then the other symptoms of which the inflammation was the true cause, cease also, and the patient is cured. This seems to me the history of the present case; the suppuration was complete, we may suppose, on the 30th of November, when the discharge ceased; after so severe an illness, a week is not too long a period to allow for the gradual cessation of the inflammation and its consequences; the sound sleep on the morning of the 8th of December greatly facilitating the process of recovery; and in fact we observe that the recovery was altogether gradual; she was sensible of the presence of light two or three hours before she was able to distinguish objects. The whole thing was gradual, and therefore may have been natural. Far be it from me to wish to derogate from the power and goodness of God, and to say that this recovery may not have been a special blessing conferred by Him at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary upon one of her faithful children; I only say, and I am confident that your Grace will agree with me in saying, that where the natural laws of reason and science furnish us with an explanation of certain phenomena, even though that explanation be not thoroughly satisfactory and convincing, *yet if it be only plausible*, we ought not indiscreetly to declare that there has been an interference with those laws by a divine miracle. In a word, the case before us cannot be said to satisfy all the conditions laid down by the Church as essential to the proof of a really miraculous cure; it *may be* miraculous, but it has not been *proved* to be such. In particular, it does not altogether satisfy either the first, second, fourth, or sixth of the following canons laid down by Benedict XIV. in his work *De Canonizatione Sanctorum*, lib. iv. pars 1, cap. 8, no. 2.

Ut sanatio a morbis inter miracula censeatur, plura debent occurrere:

1. Ut morbus sit gravis, et vel *impossibilis*, vel curatu difficilis;
2. Ut morbus qui depellitur, *non sit in ultimâ parte statûs*; ita ut non multo post declinare debeat;
3. Ut nulla fuerint adhibita medicamenta, vel si fuerint adhibita, certum sit ea non profuisse;
4. Ut *sanatio sit subita et momentanea*;
5. Ut sanatio sit perfecta, non manca aut concisa;
6. Ut nulla notatu digna evacuatio, seu *crisis præcedat temporibus debitis*, et cum causâ; si enim ita accidat, tunc vere prodigiosa sanatio dicenda non erit, sed vel ex toto, vel ex parte naturalis;
7. Ut sublatus morbus non redeat.

It is sufficiently clear, we think, that in the archdiocese of Sens, there is no danger of the episcopal sanction being rashly given to the report of any alleged miracle; yet in the very same official document from which we have made these extracts, the Vicar-General goes on to inform his diocesan that he does not see how he can withhold that sanction from the report of another miraculous cure, into which he had been ordered to inquire, and which had taken place a few weeks before that whose history we have now given, in the same town of Avallon. Accordingly, on the 4th of March, 1849, the Archbishop published a decree in which he makes no mention whatever of the cure of Marie-Pierrette Gagniard; but declares concerning the other case, of Antoinette Bollenat, that after the most mature examination, it is found to present all the essential characteristics and conditions of a miraculous cure. We abstain from entering upon the details of this case, only because we wish to be as brief as possible; and we have special reasons, which will presently appear, for taking *another* case, as the one only instance we shall give of a miracle, wrought in confirmation of the apparition at La Salette, which *has* received episcopal sanction.

On the 16th of April, 1846, when the community of nuns known by the name of the religious of St. Joseph were being removed from one establishment to another in the city of Avignon, the whole population of the place saw one of the sisters being transported in a litter, because she was unable to bear removal in any other way. She had been a member of that community for twelve years; during the last eight of which she had had many severe illnesses, which terminated at last in a confirmed consumption. She was obliged to keep her bed, and only attempted to hear Mass five or six times in the year; being carried to the chapel to gratify her own earnest desire, but soon brought back again in a state of insensibility, having fainted from fatigue. On the 14th of February, 1847, she received Extreme Unction; and the holy Viaticum was administered to her two or three times more in the course of the next month. Both the doctors who attended her had pronounced her case desperate; and had warned the sisters that they might expect her death at any moment, without any pre-

monitory symptoms whatever ; for that the marvel was what kept her alive from day to day. The only food that she took were a few teaspoonsful of milk and water, or very weak broth ; and she seemed in the last stage of exhaustion. Whilst Sister St. Charles (this was her name in religion) was lying in this state, the reverend superioress of the house heard rumours of miracles that were said to be wrought by the use of water from the fountain of La Salette. She herself acknowledges that she did not at first believe in these rumours ; but by and by, when she heard of a miraculous cure having been wrought in the town of Avignon itself, and having ascertained that this at least was no false report, she determined to have recourse to the same remedy in behalf of her dying sister. She expressly states in her deposition, that although she certainly desired the recovery of Sister St. Charles, yet that her principal object in this novena was the glory of the Blessed Virgin, and the confirmation of the story she had heard of her apparition on the mountain of La Salette ; and it was for this reason that she selected this particular sister from among others who were in the infirmary, because her illness was so notorious and so inveterate, that, should she be restored to health, this recovery would answer the end of the novena far better than the recovery of any other. When the idea was first suggested to the invalid, she said that she had no wish to recover ; and that she would rather die or continue to suffer as she now did, according to God's good pleasure. The superioress was obliged to interpose her authority in order to prevail upon her to take part in the novena with the rest of the community ; but when once the novena was begun, the sufferer expressed her firm conviction that she should be cured. Nothing, however, occurred during the first seven days to give any encouragement to such an expectation ; on the contrary, she seemed to be daily growing worse and worse ; so that the good sisters began to think their prayers were going to be answered in a different sense from what they had intended, and that the sufferings of their companion would be terminated by a removal to heaven, not by a restoration to this earth. There was to have been a general communion of all the sisters for the object of the novena on the last day,

the Saturday; but the unexpected arrival of the Bishop of Châlons caused them to anticipate this arrangement, and they went to Holy Communion on the Friday. This was a great disappointment to Sister St. Charles; for she had hoped to have been cured in time to accompany her sisters to the altar: whereas she now found herself still stretched on her bed of sickness, in her habitual state of weakness and suffering, whilst all the rest of the community were assembled in the chapel. Whilst her mind was engaged by this thought, she felt a sudden and complete change throughout her whole body; all her ailments instantly left her; her own expression is, that 'it was as though some invisible hand had lifted them all from off her;' she tried to turn in her bed, and found that she could do so with ease; whereupon she immediately exclaimed, 'I am healed!' Another sister, who was lying ill in the same dormitory, misunderstood the words, and fancied she was dying; and, being unable to go to her assistance, began to cry; whereupon Sister St. Charles jumped out of bed, and went to console her. Another sister, who had the care of the whole house while the community were at Mass, came running to the infirmary in a great state of alarm at hearing noises as of people moving, in a room where she had left but two bed-ridden nuns; she arrives, well-nigh out of breath, and seeing one of these dying invalids sitting by the bedside of the other, she is seized with a sudden faintness. Sister St. Charles gives her water to drink, and becomes for the moment nurse to her two companions. Then she dresses herself without any assistance from any body, and goes to the ante-chapel, where she kneels without any support during the remainder of Mass. We need not describe the scene which followed; the amazement of the sisterhood, the doctors, and the public, who thronged the convent parlour for several days that they might see and converse with the nun whom they had known to have been so long at the point of death, and whom they now saw apparently in perfect health, and whom they listened to talking continually without fatigue. The medical man who attended her testifies both to the suddenness and completeness of her recovery; he says that he found her pulse, which but two or three days before had been

at 150, reduced to 100 ; her voice clear and sound ; her face healthy and joyous ; her appetite and her strength returned, so that she could run up and down stairs with ease, and even carry a burden of 150 pounds weight without fatigue. And he concludes his account of her state with this observation, that if he is asked *how* this great change has taken place, he can only say, speaking as a doctor, that 'it has not followed the ordinary phases ; for myself, I must frankly acknowledge that I have never seen anything at all like it.' Another physician, the *médecin en chef* of the public hospital of the town, and a practitioner of thirty-six years' standing, speaks still more strongly : 'I declare,' he says, 'that the unlooked-for recovery from a state judged by medical men to be mortal to a state of perfect health *sous tous les rapports fonctionnels et organiques*, which I have witnessed in the above-named Sister St. Charles, has been wrought suddenly and without the intervention of the ordinary processes of art, *et que partant il tient du prodige.*' We are not surprised, then, to hear that the Archbishop of the diocese, who had known her during her long and painful illness, and who saw her now that she was thus suddenly restored to health, used constantly to declare that not even a resurrection from the dead would be to him a more patent miracle than the recovery of this person.

We will not detain our readers by any further details on the subject of miracles ; we will only say that there have been very many both in various dioceses of France and elsewhere, some of which are supported by evidence not less clear and striking than that which we have recorded ; and several, after having been juridically examined by the proper ecclesiastical authorities, have been solemnly approved and published ; and when we consider the express object with which some of the devotional exercises that have been thus rewarded were originally begun, we need not hesitate to say with Richard of St. Victor, *Domine, si error est quem credimus, a Te decepti sumus.*

We must not try our readers' patience, and waste our own time, by enumerating all the objections which have been raised against this history of La Salette by persons more eager to

display their ingenuity than to ascertain the truth. There are two or three mis-statements, however, made at various times by the infidel press of France, and diligently repeated in our own country, which are too important to be omitted; if we did not mention them, it might be supposed that we were ignorant of them. It was said, for example, by the *Times*, that the whole imposture had been discovered to be the work of an eccentric woman living in the South of France, and that the police were in chase after her, and would soon unravel the plot. But the same journal did not afterwards inform its readers that the person in question, being most indignant at the accusation, insisted on the prosecution of the inquiry, and proved that on the day of the apparition she was in a distant city, engaged in a lawsuit.

A second mis-statement, far more important, concerns the supposed disbelief in the apparition by the saintly curé of Ars; it was even rumoured that Maximin had retracted his whole statement in the presence of this venerable man. Our readers will find a whole chapter dedicated to the refutation of this story, by Dr. Ullathorne in his valuable work to which we have already more than once referred, and from which we will now make a few important extracts, slightly condensed, however, from the form in which they there appear. 'Certain enthusiasts for the Baron of Richemont, the pretended Louis XVII., got it into their heads that the secrets of La Salette regarded their idol. Three of these gentlemen contrived to draw Maximin to Lyons; there they surrounded him with their own friends, tried their mesmeric arts upon him, and did all in their power to elicit his secret and connect it with their cause. Under the pretence of enabling him to obtain some light on his vocation, they conducted him to the curé of Ars. The vicar, or assistant of the curé, did not at that time believe in the apparition at La Salette. Soon after Maximin's visit, it began to be rumoured that Maximin had made a complete retractation of the whole story to the curé. Three weeks afterwards he returned to Grenoble, and there underwent a severe examination in presence of the bishop, before a commission of clergy and laity. He was tried and urged in every way to induce him to avow this retractation. But he remained

firm and intrepid. He protested that he would never avow but what he had always avowed, and what ^{he} he would avow on the bed of death, that he had seen a beautiful lady, who spoke and disappeared. He maintained that he had given no contradiction to this at Ars, but admitted that not understanding the curé distinctly, he had repeatedly said yes and no at hazard.

After this, Maximin, unknown to any one, wrote a letter to one of those gentlemen who had conducted him to Lyons. In it he says, . . . 'They have told you that I belied myself before the curé of Ars. I think myself all this comes from the vicar, for you know what he said to us at the convent where he took us. For as to me, I assure you that I noways belied myself, and I am always ready to give my blood to maintain what I saw,' &c. &c. To another friend who questioned him on the same subject, he said that he had not understood the curé very well. 'He asked me if I had seen the Blessed Virgin?' and I answered him, 'I do not know whether it was the Blessed Virgin. I saw something . . . a lady.' 'But it is said that you retracted before the vicaire (not the curé), of Ars.' 'Ah! he said that I had made out a story, and that I had not seen the Blessed Virgin, and as I was not in a very good humour, I said to him, have it so if you will, that I don't tell the truth, and that I did not see anything; and then I went away.' This was Maximin's well-known style of answering, whenever his veracity was called in question.

But let us turn from Maximin's account of the matter, to the impression created on the mind of the curé of Ars. Immediately after this affair took place, one of the Marist fathers went expressly to Ars, to inquire into its truth, and the curé expressed himself in these words: 'I have always believed in La Salette, and believe in it still; I bless medals and images of Our Lady of La Salette. I have distributed a great number of them. And see here whether I do not believe;' and here the curé approached his bed, and drawing the curtain, showed a large picture of Our Lady of La Salette, framed and hung up at the head of his bed. 'I did not insist further,' writes this respected religious to the Bishop of Grenoble, 'for I was convinced that the good curé had scarcely had anything to do

with all that I had heard reported of him.' The good curé was quite disconsolate at all that was attributed to him, and gave expression to his feelings to several persons, of whom one wrote on October 20, 1851, to the Abbé Rousselot as follows: 'He told me that he had never said that the event of La Salette had not taken place; only that it was possible that the child had not well explained himself, or that he himself had not well understood him.'

After these express and repeated disavowals, both on the part of Maximin himself, and of the saintly curé, it is hard to believe in the good faith of those who continue to urge this little incident as a conclusive argument against the whole history. As the Bishop of Bellay remarked a few days after it first began to be spoken of, 'It is but a trial and a tempest raised by the devil; the fact will come out of it more brilliant;' and as Maximin said on the same occasion, 'La Salette is now like a flower, which in winter they cover with dirt and dung, but in the summer it springs from the earth more beautiful.'

It still remains to answer another, and, so far as I know, the latest lie on the subject of La Salette. On November 11, 1865, a French journal ventured to say, that whereas all the world now believed in the miracle of La Salette, a still more extraordinary miracle had since been wrought; for he who was the witness of the first miracle when a boy, now that he is a man, obstinately refuses to believe what then took place. 'It is quite curious,' the journal went on to say, 'to see him holding his sides with laughter when he happens to come across any of those groups in plaster, which represent the apparition, and himself and his sister (!) as the witnesses. His sister being of a more flexible character, has allowed herself to be enclosed in a convent, where the poor thing devoutly prays that the apparition might have taken place.'

This truly Parisian form of falsehood was reproduced in more sober terms by some of our own journals, which, however, again did *not* reproduce the French journalist's ungracious retraction of his lie, which he was forced to publish about six weeks later (January 6, 1866). It ran in this wise. 'In our number of November 11 last, we published a short article on

the shepherd-boy of La Salette. M. Maximin Giraud sees in that article imputations injurious to his character as an honest man and a Catholic. The attack upon the truthfulness of the testimony which he has always given before the magistrates, the judicial and ecclesiastical authorities, and before a multitude of other persons, has specially offended him. We declare, therefore, with the best grace in the world, that we had no malicious intentions in his regard, and we have no difficulty in acknowledging that the information we received was incorrect.' As might have been expected, the witty lie had flown further, and penetrated deeper than the retractation could follow, and Maximin found himself pestered by innumerable letters of inquiry. On February 2, therefore, in the same year, being at that time a Pontifical Zouave, he published a short pamphlet, from which we make the following extracts :

As a Christian, I have long ago laid at the foot of the cross all personal injuries ; but, as a witness, I should have deemed myself an apostate, and should have thought that I was drawing down upon myself the curse of heaven, if I did not protest in favour of my testimony and of my belief in the apparition of Our Lady of La Salette. . . .

This gentleman wishes to know if I am myself convinced of the immense privilege which I have gratuitously received from the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In order that for the future I may not again be accused of incredulity with regard to the event of La Salette, by such expressions as these : 'It is asserted—it is said—it is reported ;' I, the witness of the apparition of September 19, 1846, an apparition well known in our day under the title of Our Lady of La Salette—now grown up, having attained to the age of thirty years complete, in full possession of my faculties, free and independent, affirm that, far from refusing to believe what I saw and heard on the Holy Mountain, I am quite ready to *give my life* in support and defence of the truth of this great event. . . .

During the course of our life, we, the children of La Salette, have been frequently questioned, and very often contradicted. All the suppositions that have been formed against us up to this day, may be reduced to three.

1. We have been taken for deceivers, clever enough to invent a story, the different parts of which are marvellously well linked together and support one another in a wonderful manner; bold enough to keep up the imposture in presence of imposing audiences; fortunate enough to get our story believed.

2. We have been considered as beings so simple as to be almost idiots; so silly as to let ourselves be employed as the tools of an impostor; so obstinate as to persevere in our foolish conviction.

3. Finally, many refusing us at once both the credit of genius and of simplicity, have regarded us as the mere stupefied spectators of a natural phenomenon, which we have given out to be a miracle.

This is all that has been said; in fact nothing more remained that could be said; these same arguments have been reproduced in a thousand different shapes, with developments too long to relate, and too unimportant to examine. It is certainly strange that to explain one problem, they should have had recourse to contradictory explanations; and, what is still more strange, the means whereby they seek to escape from a difficulty, always produces a difficulty still more perplexing. Thus, what would seem more natural than to have met our narrative with the words: 'Children, you are little story-tellers.' Nevertheless, just observe to how many questions this gives rise. Why do these children deceive us? What end do they propose to themselves? How have they framed their plot? What success do they venture to promise themselves? Are they ambitious?—Do they wish to make themselves a name? Are they avaricious?—Do they run after money? Are they depraved, and in search of new pleasures? For people do not tell lies merely for the sake of lying, especially in so grave a matter, and with such unshaken constancy. With what marvellous precocity are not these little children endowed? They thoroughly know the human heart; for they have found out the secret of exciting public curiosity to the highest pitch, by touching upon a question full of burning interest in these days, the question of the supernatural. They have foreseen with surprising sagacity all the objections that

could be urged against them. The most searching interrogatories do not frighten them, the most captious expressions do not disconcert them; they escape every snare by means of clear and peremptory answers. Whether confronted or separated, their depositions agree, and mutually complete and corroborate one another, and this even as regards the most unimportant details. Theologians have acknowledged themselves vanquished; lawyers and learned men, at first full of extreme boldness, have soon been afraid that they saw but too clearly. Is this all? No. These little deceitful impostors, gifted with such prodigious skill, are nevertheless so modest that in their own part of the country they let themselves be taken for rough, ignorant peasant-children, incapable of receiving instruction, idle and careless, unable to learn their catechism, and forgetting on the road a commission with which they have been charged. Or rather, these little imps, whose hearts are so perverse as to deceive the entire universe, are at the same time such consummate hypocrites that everybody takes them for candid and innocent souls.

If any one regards me as an impostor, listen to what I reply. If you make me out to be so artful as to invent such a deception, would you have me to be so stupid as to turn it against my own interests? This would be to unite great cunning to extreme stupidity—two things which will not easily be found existing together. If I have run after fortune, glory, and pleasure, it must be acknowledged that I have missed my way. I can say without regret that I have not found any of these things. I say yet more: my testimony about this very subject has always been the cause of all my vicissitudes. Why have I not been left among my mountains? My life would have been less disturbed and far happier. Among my countrymen, I should not have had to experience what it costs to live among strangers, and the black bread of my village would not have failed me so often as the more delicate nourishment of great cities. I say yet more: I should now be a rich man if I had had the cowardly complaisance to deny the truth of what I had asserted. What pain could there be in re-establishing the truth, supposing that I had betrayed it, when I could immediately reap the benefit of a widely-spread scandal

and give my name every publicity? Those who attribute to me so many vices will not imagine that I could be afraid of scandal.

To conclude. How is it that I am at once so ingenious and so stupid, so audacious and so cowardly, so impious and so scrupulous? Am I then an inexplicable monster, or is it my adversaries' hypothesis that is monstrous? In the latter case, let the hypothesis be abandoned; and in the former, let a miracle be recognised in the moral order at least as astonishing as the one which I am defending.

Beaten upon this point, our adversaries betake themselves to the opposite extreme, and, with a magical power beyond that of any ordinary sorcerer, they forthwith transform us into little idiots, victims of a fraud, of which we afterwards became the advertisers. This, then, is my reply: If our simplicity exposed us to believe error, it did not prevent us from adhering to truth; and if it was so easy to deceive us, why has it been so difficult to undeceive us? The obstinacy in presence of the most distinguished men of the age, with which we are reproached, proves how little we were susceptible of being influenced by others; and if the reasons brought forward by these superior intellects have had no effect upon us, it is because they were very weak as opposed to the event of which we are the witnesses. Why do people, according to the needs of the case, make of us by turns credulous children and minds which cannot be convinced? Are there, then, two beings in us which mutually destroy one another? But, before denying the miracle of La Salette, explain to me, I beg of you, this other miracle in the intellectual order.

No, people will say, let us cease to injure these innocent children. They fancied they saw something which had no existence; the science of optics affords the truest explanation of many marvels. But what! Mélanie and I then were seized at the same instant with the same hallucination; and, strange to say, our ears were deceived as well as our eyes, and heard the same identical words! Must all the laws of nature be thus overturned to prove that nature has not been overturned in one of her laws? This sudden malady, which had had no preliminary symptoms, and has had no subsequent continuance, is as extraordinary as the fact which you refuse to believe.

Now, make your choice and come to what conclusion you please ; only, if you do not accept my testimony, I can assure you that you will always find yourself in inextricable difficulties on this subject. This is a case in which you must either rise to the supernatural or fall into the absurd. Recognise the truth of the miracle, and what an act of faith will you not be making in an age which is especially opposed to Divine facts ? Try to deny it, and what strange suppositions will you not have to invent in order to support your denial ? This is the singular alternative in which I leave my readers.

CHAPTER V.

ENGLAND.

1.—*Anglo-Saxon Sanctuaries.*

FEW countries were richer in sanctuaries dedicated to the Blessed Virgin than old Catholic England, which, as most readers are aware, derived its beautiful title of 'The Dowry of Mary' from the number of churches which bore her name, of which a large proportion are still standing. Many of these were places of pilgrimage, resorted to no less devoutly than Einsiedlen or Loreto, whilst the foundation of others is linked with legendary tales which manifest to us how familiar to the mind of the old English Catholic was the notion that certain spots, and those for the most part 'the solitary places of the wilderness,' were regarded by her with special favour, and had not unfrequently been rendered sacred by her visible presence. Scattered moreover through the writings of our ancient historians, we find notices of particular favours granted through the intercession of Our Lady, and sometimes before favourite images or shrines; and these narratives have a peculiar value, as showing how identical in all ages and countries is the spirit of Catholic devotion, and how wholly without foundation is that theory which represents the religious practices in use among Catholics of other lands as childish superstitions, opposed, not merely to *Protestant* prejudices, but to *English* good sense. The notion that English people have a right in virtue of their nationality to be more hard-headed and incredulous than their neighbours, and less susceptible to devout impressions, is so very generally assumed as indisputable, and made to do such exceedingly bad service in matters of contro-

versy, that it will not be without its use if we succeed in showing that the Englishman of the seventh, the tenth, or the thirteenth centuries, though he doubtless displayed many of the characteristic features which we commonly attribute to his race, had as lively a faith in the supernatural, and as tender a devotion, as the Italian or the Spanish Catholic of the same date, and that his devotion was expressed after the same simple, and often poetic, fashion as theirs.

To those who believe that devotion to the Mother of God forms an integral part of the Christian system, the fact that it was preached and practised in England at a date coeval with the establishment of Christianity does not require proof. Yet proofs might be cited if required, no less from the history of the British than from that of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Thus William of Malmesbury, in his brief notice of the achievements of King Arthur, whilst protesting against the fables with which the life of the British hero has been obscured, records as historic that great victory at Mount Badon—gained, as he says, by the help of the Mother of God, whose image the king bore into battle. It is likewise said that he had her image painted inside his shield, and that she many times miraculously defended him. This shield is declared to have been exposed for public veneration in a church in the British capital, and is numbered among other miraculous images by the author of the ‘Atlas Marianus,’ under the title of the *Virgo de Clypeo*, or Our Lady of the Shield.

As every reader will be aware, the most ancient Christian temple ever erected in this island is held by constant and venerable tradition to have been that little church of wreathed twigs which St. Joseph of Arimathea is said to have constructed, and which, according to ancient legends, was believed to have been consecrated by Our Lord Himself, in honour of his Blessed Mother. Whoever may have been the real founder of this church, it was certainly dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and is described in 433, as ‘an ancient and holy spot, chosen and sanctified by God, in honour of the immaculate Mother of God, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.’ The stone church subsequently built, appears to have been dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul; but, in 530, St. David, visiting Glastonbury, with

seven of his suffragan bishops, just after the close of his celebrated 'Synod of Victory,' added a chapel to the east end of the church, which he consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, and adorned the altar with a precious sapphire. It was called 'The Great Sapphire of Glastonbury,' and was fixed in a golden super-altar, together with which it was delivered up into the rapacious hands of King Henry VIII., at the time of the suppression. Henceforward, the whole church was commonly spoken of as the church of the Blessed Virgin; and, in 708, Ina, king of the West Saxons, in gratitude for the prosperity of his reign, which he attributed to the special patronage of Our Lady, rebuilt both church and monastery on a grand scale, and endowed the new edifice with a profusion of costly treasures. The church, thus restored, was dedicated to Our Lady, St. Peter, and St. Paul; but in Ina's charter it is constantly spoken of as 'St. Mary's of Glastonbury,' and the same document makes mention of 'the many and unheard-of miracles' which had already illustrated this holy spot. The catalogue of Ina's donations deserves insertion, as an example of royal munificence in the ages of faith, and will bear comparison with any similar records of offerings made at the shrines of Montserrat or Loreto. In the first place, the chapel of St. Joseph, which he attached to the church, was entirely plated over with the precious metals, and on it he is said to have expended 2640 pounds weight of silver, and 264 pounds weight of gold, for the altar alone; besides which, he presented a gold chalice; a paten, weighing ten pounds; a gold thurible, weighing eight pounds; two silver candlesticks, of twelve pounds and a half; a gold cover for the Book of the Gospels, of twenty pounds; a holy water-pot, of twenty pounds, in silver; images of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the twelve apostles, containing 172 pounds weight of silver, and twenty-eight pounds of gold; and lastly, a pall for the altar, and other vestments, all of cloth of gold, curiously wrought, and adorned with precious stones.*

* We find from a very profane letter addressed by Layton to Cromwell, that among the relics preserved at Glastonbury, and sacrilegiously seized by the visitors of King Henry VIII., were a portion of Our Lady's girdle, and one of her robe, as well as the girdle of St. Mary Magdalen, which last

During the period of the Danish incursions, the church so magnificently endowed by Ina and his queen fell into partial decay, though it never ceased to be regarded with singular veneration, both by the British and Anglo-Saxon race. Its restoration was effected by St. Dunstan, and familiar as we all are with some of the legends of his life at Glastonbury, there are others connected with his special devotion to the Mother of God, and with the popular devotion paid to her in this sanctuary, which are less commonly quoted, and are very much to our present purpose.

We read then that, as has so often been the case with other great servants of God, destined to achieve some special work in the Church, a miraculous sign was granted to his mother Kyndreda, before his birth, which seemed to foreshadow the future greatness of her child. On the Feast of the Purification, she and her husband, Herstan, were attending the solemn Mass of the day in the church of Our Lady, and according to custom they in common with the rest of those present held in their hands the burning tapers which they were afterwards to offer at the altar. Suddenly every taper was extinguished, and as the people looked about to discover the cause of so strange an accident, they beheld the candle which Kyndreda bore suddenly relighted by a flame which descended, as it seemed, from heaven. Hastening to her they all relit their tapers from the one she held, and regarded the incident as betokening some special grace which should be granted to her child, who they conceived would certainly prove a favoured client of Our Lady.

It was in this same church that Dunstan received his early education, imbibing, as was natural, a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin; and it was here also that he returned after a brief time spent at the court of King Athelstan, and led an eremitical life in a cell which he had constructed for himself. Osbern, a monk of Canterbury, who wrote his life about the year 1020, informs us that among other persons attracted to Glastonbury by the fame of his sanctity, was a certain lady of was presented by the Empress Maud. Our Lady's girdle is described as 'of red silk, a solemn relique, sent to women in travail.' There was also preserved a relic of the Holy Coat.

the blood-royal named Ethelsgiva, or Ethelfleda, who was so charmed by his instructions that she caused a small habitation to be built for her adjoining Our Lady's church, wherein she spent the remainder of her days, frequenting the church both by day and night, and spending her time in the exercise of prayer, alms-deeds, and penance. Ethelsgiva shared the devotion of her spiritual father towards Our Lady of Glastonbury, and abundantly provided means for keeping up the service of God in her favourite sanctuary. And, in return, Our Lady bestowed many favours upon her, so that she was said to obtain whatever she asked in prayer. One example of a homely description is thus agreeably related by Osbern: 'On a certain day King Athelstan coming to Glastonbury, went to visit St. Mary's church, on account of the sanctity of the place. Ethelsgiva hearing this, besought him to rest awhile in her house, and to accept of refreshment in the shape of food and drink. The king somewhat unwillingly consented, not wishing to offend one related to him by family ties, and whom, moreover, he knew to be so devout a servant of God. Delighted at this she set herself to prepare what was required for the royal visit, and at last satisfied herself that a sufficient supply of everything had been provided, except a certain drink called mead, to the use of which the English are greatly addicted, and of which she had but little. Fearing, therefore, lest the deficiency of this should cast into the shade the plentiful supply of all the rest, she betook herself to the chapel of Our Lady, in order to ask her help in this emergency. Prostrating there alone, she begged her good Mother to obtain from God, by her prayers and blessing, that the mead might be abundantly increased. Wonderful to say, the king with a great multitude of his followers sat down to table, and all of them drank copiously of the aforesaid liquor, yet the vessel out of which it was drawn always remained full. And when the king at last departed, it hardly seemed as if anything had been taken out.' This devout lady afterwards left all her wealth for the endowment of Glastonbury, and for other monasteries.

Few of our English saints can be cited, the character of whose sanctity is so strictly contemplative as that of St. Dun-

stan, or of whom there are recorded a greater number of visions, ecstasies, and heavenly favours. One of these narratives shows us the devout client of Mary watching at night in one of her sanctuaries, and rewarded for his devotion by her visible presence. For, even when filling the archiepiscopal throne, Dunstan abandoned none of his austere eremetical exercises, but spent great part of his nights in prayer and vigil. 'When he lived at Canterbury,' says his biographer, 'it was his custom to visit the holy places by night, and there to offer himself to God by repeated acts of contrition and compunction. On a certain time, according to his custom, he thus in the silence of the night visited the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, where the blessed Augustine and other fathers of the church of Canterbury lie buried, and there for a long time lay prostrate in prayer. Then, going forth, he made his way to the chapel of the Blessed Mary, ever a virgin, which was situated in the east part of the monastery.* As he drew near, he heard voices inside chanting the words, *Gaudent in cælis animæ sanctorum qui Christi vestigia sunt secuti.*' Astonished at this, he stood at the door, and looking through the chinks (for it was locked), he beheld the chapel full of light, and a number of persons sitting clothed in white, who seemed to be singing this anthem. At another time, when he repaired by night, for a similar purpose, to the church of Our Lady, behold that Blessed Virgin of virgins, surrounded by a choir of virgins, came out to meet him, and with great honour conducted him into her sanctuary, two of the attendant choir going before and singing that hymn of Sedulius :

Cantemus, sociæ, Domino, cantemus honorem ;
Dulcis amor Christi personet ore pio.

When this verse had been repeated a second time by the

* Quod in *orientali* ipsius monasterii parte situm erat (Vita S. Dunstani). Eadmer, in his minute account of the ancient cathedral as it existed before the time of Lanfranc, distinctly says that the Lady Chapel was at the *west* end of the church. But it must be remembered that the building which he describes was not the same which was standing in Dunstan's time. That had been burnt down by the Danes in 1011, and, after being rebuilt by Canute in 1017, was again destroyed by fire in 1067. Eadmer's description appears to apply to the erection of Canute.

whole choir, two, who followed the first-mentioned singers, continued the hymn and sang

Primus ad ima ruit magna de luce superbus:
Sic homo cum tumuit primus ad ima ruit ;

And the virgins of the first choir, with the two sets of singers, continued to sing the hymn after this manner until the man of God had entered the church.'

The Lady chapel, which was the scene of these heavenly visions, no longer exists at Canterbury. Nevertheless, as we shall hereafter see, another notable sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin was raised in after-ages in the very crypt where reposed the ashes of St. Dunstan. The devotion borne by him towards the Mother of God probably had its influence over the Anglo-Saxon princes whose counsels he directed, and who are all spoken of by their historians as special clients of Mary. Thus Edgar the Peaceable laid his sceptre on the altar of Our Lady of Glastonbury, and solemnly placed his kingdom under her patronage ; and we find St. Edward the Martyr uniting his authority with that of the Archbishop in a formal authorisation of the popular pilgrimage to one of Our Lady's sanctuaries. Sideman, bishop of Crediton in Devonshire, having died in 977, whilst the Great Council of Kirtlington was still sitting, the king and the archbishop decided that he should be buried in St. Mary's Minster at Abingdon, which had recently been restored by St. Ethelwold. Thither his remains were accordingly conveyed, and it was at the same time ordained in council that 'it should be lawful for the country people to make religious pilgrimage to the church of St. Mary of Abingdon.'*

About the same time that Ina was restoring the church of Glastonbury, the sanctuaries of Evesham, Tewkesbury, and Worcester, were rising on the banks of the Severn ; all destined to become the resort of English pilgrims, while the first-named of the three is said to trace its foundation to a miraculous apparition precisely similar in character to those numerous

* Ordinarent jam nunc rex Edwardus et Dunstanus Archiepiscopus ut homines religionis causa ad ecclesiam S. Mariæ Abbandunensem peregrinarentur, quod et fecerunt.—Spelman, 'Concilia,' vol. i. p. 493.

legends of later date which are to be found attached to the history of so many of Our Lady's sanctuaries. At the beginning of the eighth century, the valley which now by its rich cultivation bears the title of the Garden of England, was a desert place overgrown with thorns and briars, which Egwin, third Bishop of Worcester, asked and obtained as a grant from Ethelred, king of Mercia, as a place of pasture for the swine belonging to his monastery. The swine were tended by four swineherds, one of whom named Eoves happened on a certain day to penetrate into the thicket, and beheld a lady standing on a particular spot with two other virgins, one on either side, all of them of exceeding beauty, and shining with a light surpassing that of the sun. The lady held a book in her hand, and was chanting most exquisite psalmody with her companions. The poor swineherd, dazzled by the splendour of the vision, returned home terrified and trembling, and related all he had seen to the bishop. And he, maturely considering the thing, after prayer and fasting, took with him three companions, and singing psalms and devout prayers, proceeded barefoot to the valley. When they had reached the thicket, Egwin, leaving his companions, proceeded alone to the spot indicated, and prostrating on the ground, remained there a long time imploring the Divine mercy. When he rose from prayer, he beheld the three virgins shining gloriously as they had previously appeared to Eoves. But she who stood in the midst far outshone her companions, and seemed to him whiter than the lily, more brilliant than the rose, and fragrant with an indescribable odour; and he perceived that she held in her hands a book and a golden cross, which likewise shone with a brilliant light. As he was considering within himself that this could be no other than the Blessed Mother of God, she, as if to answer him that his judgment was correct, stretched out her hand and blessed him with the cross which she extended towards him, and thereupon the vision disappeared.

Egwin, who felt his heart filled with extraordinary consolation, understood that it was the will of God that he should erect a church in that place, and dedicate it to the Ever-Blessed Virgin. For in the early part of his episcopate, when vexed by many temptations and persecutions on the part of

his flock, whose heathenish practices he had courageously opposed, he had vowed to build some temple to the Lord should He be pleased to deliver him from his trials.

He therefore caused the place to be cleared, and began the work, which was completed in the year 701, through the assistance of Offa, King of the East Angles, and the two Mercian kings, Ethelred and Coenred.

In the charter granted by Coenred and Offa in 709, they solemnly confirm the gift of 'that place wherein the Blessed Virgin Mary manifested herself to the venerable man Egwin;' and another charter, granted by Egwin himself in 714, which also bears the signatures of the kings, gives a circumstantial account of the events already narrated.

The story of the first foundation of Evesham was moreover depicted on the Abbey seal, the principal side of which represented the abbey upheld by the kneeling figure of St. Egwin, while on the other appeared the three virgins of his vision. Below, in a kind of trefoil, we see Eoves tending his swine in the forest, surrounded by the following old English legend—

Eoves · her · wenede · mit · was · swin
Egwin · clepet · Vis · Eovishom.

—which may be thus rendered: 'Eoves here wended with his swine, Egwin named it Vis (or Vic) Eoveshom,' that is, Evesham of the Wicci, as the people of Worcestershire were then denominated.

Evesham in after times became a favourite place of pilgrimage, and possessed more than one image of Our Lady, all of which, as the monk of Evesham informs us, were regarded by the people with great veneration. 'Sothely,' he says, 'there were in this same church iii. or iiij. images of our Blessed Saint Mary, having in her lap the image of Our Saviour Jesus Christ in the form of a little babe; and they were set at every altar, right well painted, and fair arrayed with gold and divers other colours, the which showed to the people that beheld them great devotion. And before every image hung a lamp, the which, after the custom of this same church, were wont to be lighted at every principal feast through all the year, both by night and by day, enduring from the first evensong

until the second evensong, before the aforesaid images of our Blessed Saint Mary.'

Almost equally celebrated was the church of Our Lady of Tewkesbury, founded in 715 by the two Mercian dukes Oddo and Dodo. William of Malmesbury asserts that the name of the spot was a corruption of the word *Theotocosbiria*, or the *Curia Dei Genitricis*, but by others it is said to have been derived from a certain hermit called Theokus, who had his residence on the banks of the river Severn. This church possessed an image of Our Lady which had the singular good fortune to escape destruction at the time of the Reformation, owing, as it would seem, to the reluctance of the magistrates to rouse the indignation of the populace, who regarded it with extraordinary veneration. At last, however, in the reign of James I., the Puritan zeal of a certain inhabitant of the town could no longer endure the presence of this relic of the old religion, and he petitioned the magistrates to deliver it over into his hands. Having at last gained possession of it, in order to show more marked contempt for the holy image, he caused it to be hollowed out, and used it as a drinking-trough for his swine. But it was remarked that all the swine that drank out of it perished by disease, and that the children of him who committed this sacrilege became every one of them lame, blind, or otherwise deformed. The old stone trough, which had been replaced by the profaned image, was fixed by the side of a well, for the purpose of preventing those who went thither to draw water from losing their footing. But the unhappy man on a time chancing to pass by that way, leapt over this very stone unawares, and falling into the well, was miserably drowned. These events occurred about the year 1625, and were communicated in a private letter from England to Father William Gumpfenberg, of the Society of Jesus, by whom they were inserted in his work entitled '*Atlas Marianus*.'

Another sanctuary of Anglo-Saxon foundation was that of Coventry, where good Earl Leofric and his wife Godiva founded the Benedictine Monastery of St. Mary's, in the year 1043. This church was remarkable above all others in Eng-

land for the extraordinary riches it contained. Godiva bestowed all her treasure on it, and sending for skilful goldsmiths she caused them to make abundance of crosses, images, and other wonderful ornaments for the decoration of the church. William of Malmesbury says that it was so enriched with gold and silver that the walls seemed too narrow to contain it all, and that the eyes of the spectators were dazzled as though what they looked on had not been a thing of real life, but a sort of miracle. The very beams supporting the shrines were overlaid with the precious metals; and in the time of William Rufus, Robert de Limesay, Bishop of Chester, who had been induced to transfer his see from Chester to Coventry, on account of the riches laid up in the latter place, ruthlessly scraped off one beam as much silver as was valued at 500 marks.

But the richest as well as the most celebrated ornament of this church was the chaplet of gems which Godiva, when lying on her death-bed, desired to be hung round the neck of our Lady's Image, and which was valued at 100 marks of silver.

The gems were strung on a thread and used after the fashion of a rosary, for Godiva, 'beginning at the first, was used as she touched each gem to say special prayers, and so proceeding from gem to gem, there was no chance of neglecting the number of prayers she desired to repeat.' She requested, moreover, that whoever visited the church out of devotion should say as many prayers as there were gems on her chaplet. This practice of repeating a certain number of Pater Nosters and Aves on a string of beads was of very old date among the Anglo-Saxons; and the Benedictine writers who claim for St. Benedict the honour of being the first to introduce the use of Our Lady's Psalter, as it was called, are used to represent it as chiefly propagated in the eighth century by Venerable Bede. F. Gabriel Bucelin, in his '*Chronologia Benedictino-Mariana*,' declares that the spread of this devotion in England was attended with very extraordinary results, and that many victories were gained over the Danes by its means. He adds, moreover, that the English who fled from their own land to escape the violence of the Danes

carried their favourite devotion with them, and became the instrument of propagating it in other countries where it had fallen into decay. B. Alan de la Roche, the great Dominican preacher of the Rosary in the fifteenth century, admits the Benedictine claims, and specially notices the fact that most of the ancient images of the Blessed Virgin in England, were represented holding the beads in their hands. We may add that in after times a great number had them suspended round their necks, and that Godiva's was only one among many similar bequests made by pious ladies.

In the troublous times of King Stephen, Robert Marmion, lord of Tamworth, seized the monastery of St. Mary's, and turning out the monks, converted the church into a fortalice which he held against the Earl of Chester. Roger de Hovedon and Henry of Huntingdon tell us that, as if to mark the Divine anger at this sacrilege, blood was seen by many persons to bubble out of the pavement, both in the church and the adjoining cloister. And the former historian adds that he had inspected the marks with his own eyes. But whatever may be thought of the truth of this prodigy, the judgment of Heaven was not long in overtaking the sacrilegious oppressor. For as he one day made a sally against the enemy, he fell into one of the trenches he had himself caused to be dug, and was wounded in the foot by an arrow. He made light of the injury, which appeared but a trifle; nevertheless, it speedily caused his death before the sentence of excommunication was removed which he had incurred by his crimes.

Leofric and Godiva lie buried in the two porches of their church. Besides their benefactions to this monastery, they bestowed large endowments on other churches, and specially on the three famous sanctuaries of Our Lady at Evesham, Worcester, and Stow, the latter of which was the mother house of Eynsham Abbey, near Oxford. A story is told in the early chronicles of the latter abbey, which is sufficiently connected with the subject to find a place here. In the reign of Henry the First, there was a certain monk of Eynsham who had a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and had received many favours from her. He happened to be present at the

death-bed of one of the young scholars brought up in the abbey, and beheld him surrounded by demons endeavouring to disturb him with their temptations. The bystanders sprinkled him with holy water from time to time, but the evil spirits still continued to vex him, until the monk invoking the aid of Our Lady, she appeared, and drove away the demons by her presence. And it was manifest that she was seen not only by her devout votary, but also by the sick boy himself, who endeavoured to mark his gratitude by singing the responsory, *Gaude Maria Virgo*. His memory failed him in the middle of the verse, but the monk made him repeat it after him ; and at the concluding words he tranquilly breathed his last.

Many of the parish churches of London were dedicated to Our Lady in Saxon times, and the devotion of the citizens towards the Mother of God is specially noticed by the historian, Florence of Worcester. In particular, it was manifested at the time when the city was threatened by Anlaf, King of Norway, and Sweyn, King of Denmark, who, in 994, sailed up the Thames in 94 vessels, each vessel furnished with three benches of oars. With this force they attacked the city and set it on fire in several places. It was the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, a day observed as a high festival. And it appears that the chief assault was made whilst the Londoners were in church invoking the aid of the Queen of Heaven against the horde of barbarians 'whose hands were red with the blood of priests, and begrimed with the spoil of churches.' Although taken by surprise they were not disheartened or panic-struck, but hurrying from the churches to the walls they succeeded in repelling the enemy, and that in so marvellous a way, and with so little resistance on the part of the pagans, that they hesitated not to ascribe their victory to the special assistance of the Blessed Virgin.

The above may suffice as examples of sanctuaries to which a certain miraculous character was attributed in Anglo-Saxon times, and towards which the popular devotion manifested itself in the form of frequent pilgrimages and munificent votive offerings. It will be seen that the national spirit underwent no change in this respect after the Norman Conquest

and whilst the older sanctuaries lost none of their popularity, a great number of new ones trace their origin to the Norman lords and prelates of the eleventh century.

2.—*Old English Sanctuaries.*

PRESENT in the army of William the Conqueror, at the battle of Hastings, was one prelate who attained considerable celebrity in the chronicles of his own time, as the founder of the cathedral of Coutances in Normandy, a sanctuary which, though not of English origin, must be briefly noticed in this place, because the extraordinary graces of which it became the scene almost immediately on its erection were in a certain way connected with circumstances which belong to the history of our own island. Geoffrey de Montbray, Bishop of Coutances, is said to have been the first to introduce into Normandy the Ogival or Pointed style of architecture, and his cathedral, which owed no small part of its decoration to the skill of English artists, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in the year 1056. Very soon after the conquest of England by Duke William, however, an event occurred which determined Geoffrey to enlarge his cathedral by the addition of a new chapel, and to establish within its walls the celebration of a new feast. The event referred to, was none other than the celebrated vision of Helsinus, Abbot of Ramsay, who being sent by William in 1070 an ambassador to the Danish court, and overtaken by a terrible tempest, commended himself in his distress to God and Our Lady, and thereupon perceived the figure of a venerable man walking on the troubled waves, who promised that he and his companions should reach their port in safety, on condition that the abbot would engage on his return to England, to keep the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin on the 8th of December, every year, and to procure the celebration of the same by others, so far as lay in his power.

Helsinus gladly made the required promise, and faithfully fulfilled it. Not only did he, on his arrival in England, introduce the feast into his own abbey of Ramsay, but he travelled through the country, preaching the devotion to rich and poor, and afterwards passed over for the same purpose into Nor-

mandy, where his words were received with enthusiasm. All the Norman bishops assembled in synod, resolved to establish the celebration of the Feast of the Conception, throughout the entire province, whence the feast was commonly known in France as the *Fête aux Normands*. Thirty years later, St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, induced the English bishops to follow the example set them by the prelates of Normandy, and the devotion soon spread into other countries. It gave rise to various confraternities and pious foundations, but no one showed more active zeal in its propagation than Geoffrey de Montbray, who dedicated a large chapel attached to his cathedral, in honour of this mystery. An image of the Blessed Virgin placed in the chapel became at once the object of great popular veneration, and so extraordinary were the miracles worked before it that Geoffrey thought it prudent to consign them to writing, and appointed one of his canons to draw up an authentic narrative of the events which every day took place before their eyes. This compilation from the colour of its binding was called the Black Book, and the author solemnly attests that nothing is herein set down, of which he and other members of the chapter have not themselves been witnesses.

The vision of Helsinus has so often been treated as a mere legendary tale, while at the same time it has so peculiar an interest to English Catholics, that it is satisfactory to find its truth confirmed by the authentic history of the Coutances foundation, avowedly undertaken in consequence of the devotion towards Our Lady's conception which had followed on the preaching of Helsinus; and we may here take occasion to add the narrative of another deliverance at sea which also led to the erection of a sanctuary of Our Lady, on the shores of Normandy. The votary in the present instance was none other than the Empress Maud, granddaughter of the Conqueror, who during the bloody civil war carried on between her adherents and those of Stephen de Blois, being forced in the year 1145 to fly from England and take refuge in Normandy, was assailed in the Channel by a storm which threatened to sink her vessel. Whilst the sailors and others on board gave themselves up for lost, the empress alone showed no signs of fear. 'Have courage,' she said, 'Our Lady is all-

powerful, and if we have recourse to her, she will not fail to come to our aid. I make a vow, if we reach land in safety, to build a chapel in her honour on whatever spot we first set foot, and to sing a hymn to Our Lady of Good Succour as soon as we shall come in sight of land.' No sooner had she pronounced her vow, than the storm seemed to abate, and the wind changing in their favour, they were not long in reaching the coast of Normandy. The pilot, who was on the look-out at the mast-head, observing the land, cried out impatiently, '*Cante, Reyn! vechi terre!*' (Sing, Queen, here is the land!) and the princess immediately intoned her hymn, in which the knights and sailors vociferously joined. They cast anchor in the little bay of Equeurdreville in Lower Normandy, and landing at Cherbourg, the first care of the *empress* was to mark out the site of a chapel, of which she herself laid the first stone, and which was finished by her son, Henry II. It bore the title of Our Lady of the Vow, and was still standing in 1793, when it was demolished by the revolutionary government of France, in order to enlarge the port of Cherbourg. Since then, however, a new and magnificent church has been raised, which, though not reared on the same site, bears the same title of Our Lady of the Vow, and so thoroughly does the old tradition still survive in the hearts of the people, that among the decorations of this church erected in the nineteenth century, are to be seen a picture and a banner, both representing our English princess in the midst of the tempest, and in the act of pronouncing her vow.

We must, however, hasten to speak of some of the sanctuaries actually erected at this time on the English soil, or the celebrity of which appears to have increased in any considerable degree at this period.

It will be remembered that many of the Norman prelates who were placed in possession of the English sees by the Conqueror were remarkable as architects, and a very large number of the English cathedrals and parish churches were rebuilt by them with great increase of splendour.

A synod held in London, in 1075, and presided over by Archbishop Lanfranc, provided moreover for the removal of

sees from small villages and defenceless towns to places of greater importance in the diocese, and it was thus that the see of Dorchester, near Oxford, became removed to Lincoln, where Bishop Remigius, a follower of the Conqueror, erected a magnificent cathedral which he purposed dedicating to the Blessed Virgin, though he died on the day before the ceremony took place. We find our Lady of Lincoln frequently mentioned among the sanctuaries which were regarded by the English with special veneration, and the inhabitants of Lincoln who took part with King Stephen in the civil war, choosing her as their particular patroness, attributed to her intercession the great victory which they regained in 1147 over the Earl of Chester, who was repulsed from the walls with great loss; whereupon, says Hovedon, 'the victorious citizens of Lincoln, filled with joy, gave great thanks and lauds to their protectress the Virgin of virgins.'

Our Lady of Lincoln continued much in repute; and in the cathedral inventory we find mention of the 'great image of Our Lady, sitting in a chair, silver and gilt, having a crown on her head, silver and gilt, set with stones and pearls, and her Child sitting on her knee with one crown upon His head, with a diadem set with pearls and stones, having a ball with a cross silver and gilt, in His left hand.'

At the same synod of 1075, to which reference has been already made, it was decreed that the ancient East Anglian bishopric of Elmham in Norfolk should be removed to Thetford in the same county, where a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin already existed. Herfast, a Norman prelate appointed to the see, assisted by the pious knight, Roger Bigod, rebuilt this church on a grander scale, and made it the cathedral church of his diocese. But the see was not destined to remain long at Thetford. In 1094, Herbert Losinga again translated it to Norwich, where it has ever since remained, and from that time Thetford, the ancient capital of the East Anglian kingdom, fell into decay. This transaction appears to have caused great regret to the inhabitants of Thetford, though Roger Bigod made them some amends by planting a community of Cluniac monks in the deserted cathedral church. His first intention had been to have atoned for the sins of his

past life by a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, that he might more fervently worship his Lord in the place where his feet stood when He ascended from the earth; but his steward Etbran dissuaded him from this, and advised him rather to bestow his alms in the foundation of some religious house, where the servants of God might make continual intercession for him and his successors. Convinced by his arguments, Roger bought the church and lands of St. Mary's, and in 1104 erecting some temporary offices for the reception of his monks, he settled a colony of Cluniacs from the priory of Lewes in the place, and set about building them a monastery within the city walls.

But it seemed as if the church of St. Mary's were doomed to be always changing its occupants, for a few years later, a certain learned monk, named Stephen, was appointed prior, who on coming to Thetford perceived that the site chosen for the monastery was very inconvenient, being quite surrounded by the burghers' houses; and with the consent of the founder, removed the foundation to a large, open, and pleasant space outside the walls, and on the other side of the river. The spot chosen was fixed on by King Henry I., who at that time kept his court at Thetford; Herbert, Bishop of Norwich began the digging of the foundation with his own hands, and the prior and founder, with other nobles of high rank, laid the first stones. The misfortunes of the men of Thetford, however, were not yet quite complete. Eight days after the foundation of this monastery had been so magnificently begun, Roger Bigod died, and contrary to his written directions, Bishop Herbert came by night, seized his body, and caused it to be interred in his new cathedral, nor could the monks ever regain possession of the remains of their founder. However the enterprising spirit of their new prior made head against all difficulties and discouragements, and in 1114, the buildings being now complete, the monks took possession, bringing with them all the valuable moveables out of the old church and cloister.

Among other property thus removed, was an image of the Blessed Virgin which had formerly been set over the high altar of the old church, during the time that it was used as the cathedral of the diocese. It was now placed over the

high altar of the new church ; but in process of time, a finer image being made, the ancient one was taken down and put by in an obscure place. This old image, however, was in the course of a few years to attract far more notice than the fine new one that had replaced it, and became the chief ornament of a noble chapel, wherein ' Our Lady of Thetford ' was venerated by many a pious pilgrim, down to the disastrous time of the Reformation. The narrative is thus related by John Brame, a monk of Thetford, in a MS. still preserved in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. There was at that time in the town, he says, a poor workman who incessantly called on the Blessed Virgin for relief from an incurable disease from which he suffered ; and one night she appeared to him, telling him that if he would be cured, he must hasten to the prior of her monastery, and command him in her name to build her a chapel on the north side of the choir, which he had newly repaired. As he paid no attention to this message, she again appeared to him thrice, whereupon he acquainted the prior, who being much astonished, resolved to obey the command, and build the chapel in wood. But the sick man returning to him, desired him on the part of Our Lady to build it of stone, and showed him the exact spot in which she would have it done. Shortly after this the prior departed out of the town, and the man going to the monastery, and not finding him at home, went to an old monk who had resided many years in the house, and gave him a token where the foundation-stone of the chapel should be placed, by showing him and every one else that would see it, for two hours together, the shape of a cross upon it, wonderfully adorned with gold and jewels, which afterwards disappeared. As the prior on his return still delayed commencing the building, Our Lady appeared in like manner to a woman in the town, and bade her go to one of the monks, and command him to bid the prior build the chapel at once. The woman neglected to fulfil this behest, whereupon the Blessed Virgin came to her in the night, and blamed her for her neglect, at the same time touching her arm, of which she immediately lost the use. Perceiving this when she awoke, and grieving for her negligence, she ran to the monk, and telling him what had hap-

pened with many tears, he advised her to offer an arm of wax to the Holy Virgin, which being done, her arm was restored.

The chapel was at last built, and judging from the ruins which yet remain, was not much inferior in size to the choir itself. Desiring to increase the people's devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the prior desired the old image which stood by a door near the chapel to be taken down and new painted, for it was a point on which our forefathers showed much solicitude, that the images in their churches 'shulde be wel peynted, that they shulde make men fayne to loke upon them; and styere to devocion.' As the painter was cleaning it, preparatory to beginning his work, he found a silver plate, fastened to the top of the head; and shewing it to the prior and monks, it was taken off in their presence, and found to conceal an opening, in which were laid many holy relics, carefully wrapt in lead, all of which had been sent to Prior Stephen by William, Prior of Merlesham, at the request of Hugh Bigod and Sir Ralf, monk of Thetford. All the relics bore their names, and most of them had been brought from Jerusalem. They consisted of portions of the Holy Sepulchre, of the sepulchre of the Blessed Virgin, of the rock of Calvary, of the purple robe of Our Lord, of Our Lady's girdle, of the holy manger, of the earth found in the sepulchre of St. John the Evangelist; together with relics of St. Vincent Martyr, St. Leger, St. Barbara, St. Gregory, St. Leonard, and St. Jerome, with some of the hair of St. Agnes. There were also two relics of English saints, namely a portion of the wooden coffin in which St. Edmund the Martyr had been laid, and in which his body had been found whole and incorrupt many years after his death, and other pieces of St. Etheldreda's coffin, wherein she also had been discovered lying as if asleep, eleven years after her death. The image itself had been made by the aforesaid Sir Ralf, who had been a monk before they removed from the cathedral, and he had caused to be made for it at his own expense a tabernacle adorned with small images, painting, gold and jewels, and had placed the said relics within the head. And being a great client of Our Lady's, he had also persuaded the Lady Maud de Samundeham to purchase the famous picture of the Blessed Virgin, then

preserved in their refectory, and for all these his labours and services, his anniversary was to be kept yearly on the Ides of October.

The image was now set up in the new chapel wherein also were kept the relics thus curiously discovered; and persons coming to pay their devotions here, and obtaining many great favours, these were noised about the country and increased the fame of Our Lady of Thetford. Thus a certain woman in Thetford having overlaid her child in the night, and finding it dead, ran with the body in her arms and placed it before the holy image, when it returned again to life. Another woman had lost her voice in consequence of a disease in her throat, and was urged by her friends to go and make her offering to the holy image of Our Lady at Wulpit in Suffolk. But she made signs that she would rather go to the image in the monk's new chapel, and doing so, her voice was restored. And she declared, on being able to speak, that the Blessed Virgin had appeared to her and touched her tongue; wherefore, in gratitude, she vowed to keep a candle burning before the holy image daily during her life. Another recorded miracle is that granted to William Keddrich, a carpenter of Hokham and Isabel his wife. For it being harvest time, they according to their custom carried with them to the field their son a boy of three years old; and while the mother was mowing towards evening the child lay down and fell asleep. Soon after a cart coming into the field the wheel passed over his head and killed him on the spot. The father was following the cart, and seeing what had happened, he took up his child and ran with him to a doctor in the town, who assured him that the boy was dead. The parents in their sore distress made a vow to go a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Thetford, and about midnight the child returned to life; whereupon the parents fulfilled their vow and made large offerings to the Blessed Virgin.

Norfolk possessed many other images of Our Lady of considerable fame, such as that known as Our Lady of the Oak, which hung in an oak-tree that grew in the churchyard of St. Martin's, Norwich, whence the church itself commonly bore the title of St. Martin's at the Oak. The image was so placed as to be seen from the street, and was greatly venerated. Pil-

grimaces were made to it, and it is mentioned by more than one foreign writer. It appears to have first attracted popular devotion in the reign of Edward II., and many persons left bequests in their wills for painting and adorning this image. In the reign of Edward VI. the image was burnt, and in order the more thoroughly to eradicate the very memory of it from the minds of the people, the oak itself was cut down, to the bitter regret of the citizens. There was also a famous chapel of Our Lady attached to the church of the Austin Friars which bore the title of the Scala Coeli, and was enriched with very large indulgences. Only two other chapels in England enjoyed equal privileges, namely the Scala Coeli at Westminster, and that at St. Botolph's church at Boston.

But incomparably the most celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady existing not only in Norfolk, but in all England, was that of Walsingham, the first foundation of which took place in 1061, when the widow of one Ricoldie de Faverches built a chapel here in all respects like to the Holy House of Nazareth. This was more than two centuries before the miraculous removal of the Holy House to Loreto, for it will be remembered that long before that event the house within which the Divine Word had been made flesh formed one of the chief localities devoutly visited by pilgrims to the Holy Land. A few years after the Conquest, Sir Geoffrey de Faverches or Favercourt, son of the first foundress, endowed the chapel with lands and revenues and built a church and priory in which he placed a community of Austin canons, his own chaplain Edwin becoming the first prior. The priory was a grand edifice often rebuilt; but the Chapel of the Annunciation stood separate from the priory church, and itself enclosed the original wooden chapel containing the famous image, to which, says Blomefield, 'foreigners of all nations came on pilgrimage, insomuch that the number of her devotees seemed to equal those of Our Lady of Loreto in Italy; and the town of Walsingham Parva owed thereto its chief maintenance and support.'

Henry III. paid a visit here in 1248, but it was during the reign of his son Edward I. that the pilgrimage first attained that extraordinary popularity which it retained until the overthrow of religion. This king had a very special devotion to

Our Lady of Walsingham, and attributed to her intercession his deliverance from death on occasion of a singular accident that took place at Windsor in 1270, just before he set out on his crusade. He was sitting playing at chess when he suddenly rose without any apparent reason and left his seat. As he did so a heavy stone detached itself from the groined roof and fell exactly on the spot where the prince had been sitting. He twice visited the shrine, once in 1247 and again in 1263, and it is probable that the miraculous translation of the Holy House from Nazareth to Loreto which took place in the reign of this monarch contributed not a little to increase the veneration of the English people to the sanctuary of Walsingham. No English shrine could boast of equal popularity; and the common people in their simplicity, believed, says Blomefield, 'that the Milky Way was appointed by Providence to point out the particular place and residence of the Blessed Virgin, and was on that account generally called *Walsingham Way*.' He adds, 'I have myself heard old people of this country so to call and distinguish it some years past.'

But it was not by the English alone that Walsingham was visited; among the list of pilgrims we find the names of many illustrious foreigners, such as King David Bruce, who came hither in the reign of Edward II. under a safe-conduct from the English king; and several of the French princes. Most of our native sovereigns paid their devotions here, and some visited it more than once; King Henry VIII. rode hither in the second year of his reign and made his offerings, having once before, when a youth, performed a pilgrimage to the chapel, walking barefoot from the town of Barsham, on which occasion he presented Our Lady with a necklace of great value. The last royal visit on record was that of his consort, Queen Catherine of Arragon, who came here in 1514, whilst the king was in France, to return thanks for the victory gained over the Scots at Flodden Field.

Erasmus who visited Walsingham before the suppression of the monasteries has described it in vivid terms in his Colloquy entitled '*Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo*.' 'There is a college of regular canons here,' he says, 'with scarce any revenues besides the offerings made by the pilgrims to the Blessed Virgin Mary,

of which the most valuable are preserved. The church is splendid and beautiful, but the Virgin dwells not in it, for the church, out of reverence, is given to her Son. She has a chapel so contrived as to be on the right hand of her Son. In this unfinished chapel is another little narrow chapel, all of wood, with an open roof, and on each side of it a narrow door through which the pilgrims are admitted to pay their devotion and make their offerings. There is scarcely any light except that from the burning wax tapers, which have a delightful smell, but within all is bright and shining, glittering all over with gold, silver, and jewels, so that you would take it to be the abode of the gods. A canon-resident is ever at the altar to receive and take care of the offerings.' On this occasion Erasmus left as his offering a fair copy of Latin verses. Among the other offerings which decorated the shrine was an image of silver gilt bequeathed in his will by King Henry VII., and a certain tablet with an image of Our Lady covered with glass bequeathed by Isabel Countess of Warwick in 1439, who also left to our Lady of Walsingham, 'her gown of cloth of gold with wide sleeves, and a tabernacle of silver like in the timbre to that of Our Lady of Caversham.'

Erasmus likewise describes some of the other offerings left in thanksgiving or commemoration of special favours obtained; and among these was a plate of copper engraven with the effigies of a knight on horseback, which was nailed on the gate of the priory. This was to commemorate an event which took place in the year 1314. On the north side of the priory, leading into the close, was a very low and narrow wicket door, through which it was difficult to pass on foot, it not being more, says an old MS. 'than an elne hie and three quarters in bredth. And a certain Norfolk knight, Sir Raaf Boutetourt, armed cap a pee and on horseback, being in days of old, 1314, persued by a cruel enemy and in the utmost danger of being taken, made full speed for this gate, and invoking Our Lady for deliverance he immediately found himself and his horse within the priory close or sanctuary, in a safe asylum, and so fooled his enemy.'

In the household accounts of Henry Percy, fifth Earl of Northumberland, we find the following entries: 'Item, My

Lord useth and accustomyth to send yerely to the upholdynge of the light of wax which his Lordschip fyndith birnynge yerly befor Our Lady of Walsingham contenyng xi lbs. of waxin it after vii^d ob. for the fyndynge of every lb. ready wrought, by a covenaut made with the Channon by grēat for the hole yeare for the finding of the said light byrning, vi^s vii^d. . . Also my Lord usith and accustomyth to send yerely to the channon that kepith the light before our Lady of Walsingham, for kepyng of the said light, lightynge of it at all service tymes dayly thorowt the yere xii^d. Also my lord usith yerely to sende afor Michaelmas for his Lordschip's offerynge to Our Lady of Walsingham, iij^d. *

The yearly offerings made to Our Lady are reckoned in one MS. at 260*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.*, but in another at 26*l.* 15*s.* only. One of the latest bequests was that of Queen Catherine of Arragon, who in her will desired that a person should make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Walsingham for the repose of her soul, distributing 200 nobles in charity on the road.

There may still be seen the 'fair green way,' made across the fields from Weeting for the accommodation of the pilgrims, and some beautiful ruins of the priory church and monastery, together with the so-called 'wishing-wells of Walsingham;' but of Our Lady's chapel not a stone remains. It was entirely destroyed in the reign of Henry VIII., when the image, so long the object of pious veneration, was taken to Chelsea and there publicly burnt.

In a letter from Roger Townsend to Lord Cromwell, we find mention of a woman punished for reporting a miracle 'done by the Image sith the same was brought thence to London;' howbeit, he adds, 'I cannot perceive but that the said image is not yet out of some of their heads.' Bishop Latimer (who showed himself particularly forward in all these works of sacrilege, and who, it will be remembered, preached at the execution of Friar Forrest, when that holy martyr was suspended by the middle and roasted at a fire

* Besides these offerings we find in the same document notices of offerings made to 'Our Lady in the White Freres' at Doncaster, to the Holy Blood of Hales, and St. Margaret's in Lincolnshire.

made of an image of Our Lady and a great rood, brought up from Wales for the occasion) also writes to Lord Cromwell as follows : 'I trust your lordship will bestow our great Sybil to sum good purpose, *ut pereat memoria cum sonitu*. She hath been the devil's instrument to bring many I fear to eternal fire. Now she herself with her old sister of Walsingham, and her young sister of Ipswich, with their two other sisters of Doncaster and Penryesse would make a jolly muster in Smithfield. They would not be all day in burning.'

Our Lady of Ipswich, mentioned above, appears to have been a very popular though less ancient place of pilgrimage. The image stood in a chapel, commonly called Our Lady of Grace, situated at the north-west corner of the lane without the west gate, which to this day goes by the name of *Lady Lane*, opposite to the George Inn. It was much frequented in Catholic times, but particularly under the Tudor sovereigns. We find it named among the sanctuaries to which Queen Elizabeth of York, the consort of Henry VII., made her yearly offerings; the others being Our Lady of Windsor, Our Lady of Eton, Our Lady of Caversham, Our Lady of Cokthorp, Our Lady of Worcester, Our Lady of Grace at Northampton, Our Lady of Walsingham, Our Lady of Sudbury, Our Lady of Wulpit, and Our Lady of Stoke by Clare.

It was to the chapel of Our Lady of Ipswich that Cardinal Wolsey, himself by birth an Ipswich man, ordered a yearly procession to be made by the college which he founded in his native town, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the special patroness of his foundation. An interesting notice of this famous pilgrimage occurs in Sir Thomas More's Dialogues, and we will quote the passage entire. 'As for the point that we spake of, concerning *miracles done in our days* at divers images where pilgrimages be, yet could I tell you some such done so openly, so far from all cause of suspicion, and thereto testified in such sufficient wise that he might seem almost mad, who, hearing the whole matter, would mistrust the miracles. Among which, I durst boldly tell you for one the wonderful work of God that was within these few years wrought in the house of a right worshipful knight, Sir Roger Wentworth,

upon divers of his children, and specially one of his daughters, a very fair young gentlewoman of twelve years of age, in marvellous manner vexed and tormented by our ghostly enemy the devil, her mind alienated and raving with despising and blasphemy of God, and hatred of all hallowed things, with knowledge and perceiving of the hallowed from the unhallowed, all were she nothing warned thereof. And after that, moved in her own mind and monished by the will of God to go to Our Lady of Ipswich; in the way of which pilgrimage she prophesied and told many things done and said at the same time in other places, which were proved true; and many things said lying in her trance, of such wisdom and learning that right cunning men highly marvelled to hear of so young an unlearned maiden, when herself wist not what she said, such things uttered and spoken as well learned men might have missed with a long study. And finally, being brought and laid before the image of Our Lady, was there another sight of many worshipful people so grievously tormented, and in face, eyes and countenance, so griselye changed with her mouth drawn aside, and her eyes laid out upon her cheeks that it were terrible sight to behold. And after many marvellous things at the same time shewed upon divers persons by the devil through God's sufferance as well all the remnant as the maiden herself in the presence of all the company, restored to their good state, perfectly cured and suddenly. And in this matter no pretext of begging, no suspicion of feigning, no possibility of counterfeiting, no simpleness in the seers, her father and mother right honourable and rich, sore abashed to see such chances in their children, the witnesses great number, and many of great worship, wisdom, and good experience, the maid herself too young to feign, and the fashion itself too strange for any man to feign. And the end of the matter virtuous, the virgin so moved in her mind by the miracle that she forthwith, for all her father could do, forsook the world, and preferred religion in a very good and godly company at the Minories, where she hath lived well and graciously ever since.'

Who would believe that a near descendant of this very Sir Roger Wentworth should have been the man to lend his ready aid in destroying the sacred image?

On December 1, 1529, Thomas, the descendant of this Sir Roger, was summoned to Parliament by writ as Lord of Wentworth, and is, it is presumed, the 'Lord of Wandeford' mentioned in a letter addressed by William Lawrence to Thomas Cromwell: 'Pleaseth your good Lordship,' he says, 'according to your commandment I have been with my Lord Wandeford, the which was very desirous and glad to hear of your lordship's good health. I opened to him your mind concerning the image of Our Lady [of Ipswich]. His good counsel and help of his servants was so ready that she was conveyed into the ship, so that very few were privy to it, and shall come up so shortly as the wind will serve.' *

By the expressions here used it is evident that the sacrilegious removal of the image would have been opposed by the people, and that considerable caution had to be used by those intrusted with the disgraceful business. The image was sent to London, and received by Thomas Thacker, Cromwell's steward, who writes to his master informing him that 'Our Lady that was at Ipswich' is now in his house near the Austin Friars, and 'bestowed in the wardrobe of beds,' till his lordship's pleasure shall be known. 'There is nothing about her,' he adds, 'but two half shoes of silver, and four stones of crystal set in silver.' A little later he writes: 'I have received from my fellow, William Lawrence from Ipswich, Our Lady's cote with two gorgetts of gold to put about her neck; and an image of Our Lady, of gold, in a tabernacle of silver gilt with the feather in the top of it gold; and a little relic of gold and crystal with Our Lady's milk in it, as they say.'

The image was shortly afterwards publicly burnt. It was probably one of those which at the time of the Reformation was regarded with peculiar veneration by the people, and which was on that account specially obnoxious to the iconoclasts, for in the homily against peril of idolatry it is named together with Our Lady of Walsingham, and Our Lady of Wilsdon. This last-named image was venerated in the church

* Ellis' Original Letters, third series, vol. iii. p. 78. The son of this Lord Wentworth was Governor of Calais at the time that the town was surprised by the French, and was in consequence condemned for high treason while still a prisoner in France.

of St. Mary's Wilsdon, a parish lying on the western boundary of Hampstead. So early as the year 1251 we find an inventory of the goods and ornaments belonging to Wilsdon church which includes a scarlet banner with a figure of the Blessed Virgin worked in cloth of gold, and two images of Our Lady; and the pilgrimage is believed to have been of very ancient date. In the same neighbourhood existed the miraculous sanctuary of Our Lady of Muswell, a chapel standing on the hill which separates Hornsey from Finchley Common. Norden, in his *Speculum Britanniae*, notices this chapel and says that it contained an image 'whereto was continual resort in the way of pilgrimage.' This arose from the miraculous cure performed (according to a tradition in his time still current) on a king of Scotland, by the waters of a spring called Mousewell, or Muswell, on the spot where the chapel stood. Lysons observes that the well still remains, but is not famed for any extraordinary virtues, whence we may infer that the cures wrought there in old time are not to be attributed to the medicinal properties of the water. The chapel was attached to the priory of Clerkenwell, and appears to have been built about the year 1112.

Among the other shrines already named as those to which Elizabeth of York made her annual offering, that of Caversham was held in great repute. The image appears to have stood in a chapel attached to the church of Caversham in Buckinghamshire, which was granted in 1162 by King John to the Austin Canons of Nutley or Notcele Abbey in the same county. The chapel was then already in existence, and was held of sufficient importance to be separately named in the grant. '*Ecclesiam de Kaversham cum Capella Beatæ Mariæ, et cum omnibus aliis pertinentiis suis.*' Afterwards the canons coming into possession of a manor at Caversham, erected a cell to their monastery, which Tanner says was much enriched by the offerings made in the chapel of Our Lady. Dugdale in his 'Baronage' speaks of the offerings made by Isabel Countess of Warwick to Our Lady of Caversham, and Gilbert Marischale Earl of Pembroke granted to the canons the tithes of all his mills and fisheries at Caversham, together with the annual sum of twelve shillings, for the maintenance of two lamps to burn

continually before Our Lady for the health of his soul and the soul of his brother. This chapel is not to be confused with the chapel of St. Anne that formerly stood on the bridge, wherein was preserved a certain famous relic which Dr. London, one of the visitors appointed by Henry VIII., describes as 'the angel with one wing, that brought to Caversham the spear-head with which Our Lord was pierced on the cross.' We confess our inability to throw any light on the history of this remarkable relic, the description of which probably owes something to the malice of the narrator.

Of Our Lady of Wulpit, a sanctuary often named in ancient testamentary documents, little can now be told. The image stood in the Lady chapel attached to the parish church of Wulpit, a village lying between Bury and Stow Market in Suffolk. In a close near the east end of the church may still be seen a spring called Our Lady's spring, which supplies a large moat with remarkably clear water. Tradition affirms that the pilgrims were wont to drink of this spring and that a chapel formerly stood near it, of which however no vestiges now remain.

Stoke by Clare was another Suffolk sanctuary. At first an alien priory of Austin friars, it was converted into a collegiate church in 1415 by Edmund Mortimer Earl of March. The chapel of Our Lady attached to this church is named in the college statutes as the '*Capella Beatae Mariæ de Stoke*,' and appears to have been a distinct foundation.

We have named so many Norfolk and Suffolk pilgrimages that our readers may perhaps be impressed with the idea that the East Anglian population surpassed their neighbours in devotion to the Blessed Virgin. But in point of fact most English counties were equally rich in these holy places. Thus Kent could boast of Our Lady of Gillingham, of Chatham, of Bradstow, and of Canterbury. The niche in which stood the famous statue of Our Lady of Gillingham may still be seen over the west door of the ancient parish church which likewise contained a rood held to be miraculous. Yet more celebrated was the neighbouring sanctuary of Chatham, an ancient Norman church now destroyed, in which existed many singular and beautiful remains of ancient architecture. Under

the entrance arch to the north porch appeared an empty niche and bracket with figures of angels at the sides extending their wings as if over the head of the figure of Our Lady that formerly occupied it, and other angels bending prostrate towards her. In this niche the famous image is believed to have stood, and some years ago, when the old church was pulled down to be replaced by what is termed, by the local historian, 'a neat edifice of brick nearly square,' fragments of sculpture richly painted and gilt were discovered among the materials with which the east window had been built up. Among these fragments were headless figures of the Blessed Virgin and her divine Child. The figure of Our Lady was dressed in a mantle fastened across the breast by a fibula in which still remained some pieces of coloured glass in imitation of precious stones.

This was in all probability the ancient and much-honoured statue of Our Lady of Chatham, desecrated at the time of the Reformation, and broken up with other building rubbish for the purpose of yet further defacing the church in which it had been honoured for centuries, by blocking up its window. Mention of both these last-named sanctuaries occurs in a legend preserved by Lambarde in his '*Perambulation of Kent*,' and related by him with certain irreverent comments which the reader shall be spared. It happened on a certain day, he says, that the corpse of some unknown man was cast on shore somewhere within the parish of Chatham, and was by charitable persons given burial in the church-yard. That night, however, as the parish clerk of Chatham slept he was aroused by a voice at his window, and asking who was there, it was answered that Our Lady of Chatham willed him to know that the person lately buried near unto the place where she was honoured was a sinner, 'which so offended her eye with his ghastly grinning, that unless he were removed, she could not but (to the great grief of good people) withdraw herself from that place, and cease her wonted miraculous working among them,' and therefore she willed him to take up the corpse and cast it back into the river. The clerk accordingly arose, and going to the church-yard disinterred the body, and conveyed it to the spot where it was first found, whence being carried away by the waters it was again taken out by some of the

parishioners of Gillingham who did as those of Chatham had done before them, and buried it in their church-yard. 'But see what followed: not only the rood of Gillingham, that a while before bestowed many miracles, was now deprived of its virtue, but even the very earth where the carcass was laid did continually for ever after sink and settle downwards.'

Another Kentish sanctuary was that of Our Lady of Court-up-Street, rendered famous in the days of Henry VIII. as the scene of the pretended revelation of Elizabeth Barton, the Maid of Kent, though it would seem to have been had in popular veneration long before her time.

Leaving these more obscure localities, however, we will betake ourselves to the sacred soil of Canterbury, for so it must surely be regarded by English eyes,—where vestiges even yet remain of the old devotion. We have already seen St. Dunstan favoured with heavenly ecstasies in the Lady chapel of the old Saxon cathedral. In the fabric which rose over its ruins not one but several altars were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. The exquisite Lady chapel, now known as the Dean's chapel, was built by Prior Goldstone about the year 1460, probably on the site of a more ancient erection. The stone screen leading into the choir displays over its arched doorway a niche under a triple-headed canopy within which formerly appeared a statue of the Blessed Virgin, under twelve other niches which contained silver images of the Apostles. On the spot called the *Martyrdom*, from the fact of its being the scene of the martyrdom of St. Thomas, a wooden altar was erected to Our Lady, whereon was preserved the sword's point, which broke off in the hands of the assassin whilst giving the fatal stroke.

From the *Martyrdom* is a descent to the crypt or Undercroft, supposed to be part of Lanfranc's structure, and undoubtedly of Norman work. Here stood the celebrated chapel of Our Lady Undercroft, situated exactly under the high altar of the cathedral. Even in its present ruinous condition it displays remains of its former splendour. On the vaultings may be seen traces of brilliant blue colouring on which appear small convex gilt mirrors, and gilded quatrefoils. The royal arms are painted in the centre, and forty shields are emblazoned

on the lower part of the arches. This chapel was also enriched by Prior Goldstone, and the armorial bearings, which mostly belong to Lancastrian nobles of the court of King Henry VI., appear to have been placed there as memorials of notable offerings at the shrine.

In a canopied niche at the east end above the altar, stood the image of Our Lady Undercroft on a rich pedestal sculptured in relief with subjects from her life. The Annunciation may still be traced, but the other sculptures are now destroyed. 'This chapel,' says Erasmus, 'is not showed but to noblemen and special friends. Here Our Lady hath an habitation, but somewhat dark, inclosed with a double rail of iron, for fear of thieves, for indeed I never saw a thing more laden with riches. Lights being brought we beheld a more than royal spectacle; which in beauty far surpassed that of Walsingham.'

This chapel is one of those which retains the most distinct traces of its former character, and if in its present state of obscurity and abandonment it should ever chance to be visited by the Catholic pilgrim, he may at the same time satisfy his devotion by visiting the tomb of St. Dunstan, whose ashes repose in the same crypt, and but a few yards distant from this once famous sanctuary.

3.—*Cistercian and other Monastic Sanctuaries.*

THE Order of Citeaux may in some sense be called an English Order. Not only was St. Stephen Harding, one of its first founders, an Englishman by birth, but the Order seems to have been adapted in a very special way to the habits and requirements of English devotion, if we may judge from the extent and rapidity with which it was propagated in this island. The abbeys of York, Waverly, Buildewas, Garendon, Tintern, Rievaulx, Fountains, and Furness were all founded in England before the death of St. Stephen, and to use the expression of his biographer, 'the Order had taken to itself all the quiet nooks and valleys, and all the pleasant streams of old England,' to which it was peculiarly suited by its agricultural character, and perhaps also by its union of manual work with contemplation.

It is no less true, that the Cistercian Order was one of those which merited in a rigorous sense to be denominated the Order of Mary. John, abbot of Cîteaux, in his '*Liber Privilegiorum*' declares that this was the first Order in the Western Church, dedicated in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and among the rules drawn up by Blessed Alberic in the commencement of the Order, was one which established that all their churches and monasteries without exception should be dedicated in honour of the Mother of God. Pope Gregory X. in one of the bulls granted by him in favour of the Order, describes it as standing on the right hand of the Spouse arrayed in golden vestments, and distinguished above every Order in the Church for its devotion to the Sacred Virgin; and this devotion was outwardly expressed by exchanging the black habit of the old Benedictines for one of white, which, according to the Cistercian traditions, was given to Blessed Alberic by the hands of the Blessed Virgin herself.

Another tradition affirms that the white woollen girdle worn by the Spanish Cistercians over their scapular, was assumed in commemoration of a favour granted to St. Stephen, who as he one day worked in the fields found himself hindered by his long scapular, when the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and girded him with a white girdle, which confined the habit and scapular. He is also said to have received a miraculous intimation of his approaching death, when praying before an image of the Blessed Virgin.

Legends of this sort may at least be taken as showing the kind of devotion which existed in the Order. It was placed in a direct and very special way under the patronage of Mary; all its churches and monasteries bore her name, and all its members inherited a certain familiar affection towards her, such as favoured children are permitted to feel and express towards an indulgent mother.

If this were the true Cistercian spirit, it certainly in no degree decayed when the Order was transplanted into England, and the history of not a few of the English Cistercian abbeys presents us with legends in which the Blessed Virgin is represented as directly assisting in the foundation of her favourite sanctuaries. Of these we will quote but two, of

which the first shall be that which attaches to the origin of Kirkstall Abbey, founded in the reign of Stephen by Henry de Lacy, in consequence of a vow he had taken to build some monastery in honour of the Blessed Virgin if he should recover from a dangerous sickness. On his restoration to health, he lost no time in accomplishing the vow, and made over the vill of Bernoldwic, which he held under Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, to the monks of Fountains, who in 1147 sent thither a colony of twelve monks and ten lay brethren, headed by their prior Alexander as abbot. They changed the name of the place to St. Mary's Hill, and remained there six years. But the site had not been well chosen. The air was unhealthy, and they suffered not only from a succession of bad harvests, but also from the depredations of the wild banditti with which the civil wars had filled the land.

Abbot Alexander greatly desired to find some spot better fitted for a monastic residence; and on a time going on a journey, he chanced to pass through a valley which at that time was thickly shadowed with woods which clothed its sides. It was called Airdale from the river Air which ran through it, a clear and beautiful stream, such as Cistercian monks loved to have near their dwellings. In short, the spot seemed to present every convenience for a foundation; plenty of wood and water, a site sheltered from cold winds by the lofty hills, and abundance of good stone for building. Though now scarcely three miles from the great manufacturing town of Leeds, it was then a solitary wilderness—inhabited only by a few brethren, whom the abbot found leading an eremitical life in the woods. He enquired of them their order of life, and how they had come hither, and who, moreover, had given them permission to settle in this valley. Then one of them whose name was Seleth, and who acted as their superior, made answer, saying: 'I was born in the southern parts of this kingdom, and came hither in consequence of a divine revelation. For when I was in my own country, a voice thrice sounded in my ears as I slept, saying, "Arise, Seleth, and go into the province of York, and seek diligently for a valley named Airdale, for a certain spot that is called

Kirkstall, for there I have provided a habitation for brethren who are to serve my Son." "And tell me, who art thou?" I said, "and who is thy Son that we must serve?" "I am Mary," she replied, "and my Son is Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour of the world." Awaking, therefore, I considered in my mind what I ought to do concerning the heavenly revelation; and casting all my care upon the Lord, I left my house and my servants without delay and set out on my journey. And directed by her who had called me, and who guided my steps, I reached this valley which thou seest without any difficulty, and obtained from some herdsmen this spot in which we live, and which is called Kirkstall. I remained alone for a long time living on herbs and roots and such alms as I received from Christian charity. But afterwards these brethren joined me, and we have followed the rule of the brethren of Leruth, having nothing of our own, and living by the labour of our own hands.' The abbot listened attentively, and considering every particular of the spot, he saw that it was both most pleasant and beautiful, and also admirably well fitted for the dwelling of monks. He found little difficulty in persuading the hermits to choose a more perfect way of life, and to enrol themselves among his community. And their former benefactor Henry de Lacy used his interest with William de Poitou, lord of the territory, to make over to the monks the valley with all its woods and water, so that in 1152 they were able to take possession of it, and to commence the building of that beautiful abbey, the ruins of which we still admire. 'Whatever were the primitive conditions of the place,' says Stephens, the continuer of Dugdale, 'for the Cistercian monks always founded their monasteries in places that had never before been cultivated or inhabited, it was afterwards a most pleasant seat, adorned with gardens, dovecotes, &c., and whatever was either for use or ornament; and also conveniently seated on the banks of a delicate river, calm and clear, which has perhaps contributed to the misnomer of the place, which is frequently called *Christall* instead of *Kirkstall*.'

From Kirkstall, we will pass on to another Yorkshire abbey, that of Joreval, a colony from that of Byland, whence in the year 1150 twelve monks were sent forth, headed by Abbot

John Kingston, carrying with them the rule of St. Benedict, and a few relics, as their only treasures.

It was on Wednesday the 8th of the Ides of March, when having received the blessing of the abbot of Byland, they set out on their journey towards a pleasant valley on the river Eure, having, says the monk Serlo, 'Jesus Christ as their guide, and his Blessed Mother Mary for their comforter, as abbot John often declared to one abbot Roger, manifesting with tears the revelation made to him.'

The revelation here spoken of is more particularly related by Richard, afterwards abbot of Savigny, and we shall give his narrative as it stands in all its simplicity. 'When John, first abbot of Joreval, and his twelve monks, first left our house to go to Joreval, they rested the first night at a certain vill, the name of which I have often heard, but at this moment forget, where the following revelation was granted in sleep to the abbot John. It seemed to him that he was at our house at Byland, and that abbot Roger commanded him to go forth with some of our monks to a far country, as if to receive orders; and as he went out through the cloister he saw in the midst thereof a certain lady, nobly dressed and adorned, and of surpassing beauty, holding by her left hand a fair child, whose face was like the light of the moon. The boy plucked a beautiful bough from a little tree that stood in the centre of the cloister quadrangle, and having done so, they both vanished from his sight. Then he went to the gate, and there he found his companions ready and awaiting him; and they went out, and as they went along, abbot John said to them: 'Do ye know well the road and the place, whither we are going?' And they replied that they did not. To whom he made answer, 'Truly, I supposed that you had known it, and now see, we have entered a thick and shady wood, and if we lose our way who will guide us?' But one of them said, 'Let us go on in confidence, for as I trust, we cannot wander far out of our way.' When they had gone on a little further, it seemed to him that they became quite surrounded by thorns and brambles and high rocks, where they could see no path, neither could they retrace their steps. So as they hesitated and bewailed themselves, abbot John proposed that they should say their

Hours and the gospel; and when they had finished, lo! the beautiful Lady and her Son, whom he had before seen in the cloister, appeared once more; and he said, 'O fair and delightful lady, what dost thou in this desert, and whither art thou going?' To whom she made answer, 'I am often in desert places, and I come from Rievaulx and Byland, where I have been speaking with the abbots, and with certain monks who are specially dear to me, and I am now going on to Newminster to console my beloved abbot there, and certain other of my monks.' Then said abbot John, 'Whereas thou art but one, how is it that one friend does not suffice thee, but that thou hast many, and those far distant?' And she replied, 'Truly I have One, who has chosen me for himself, and from whom I am never separated, either in presence or in will; nevertheless it seems good to me to seek other friends also who love me faithfully next to him, yet nevertheless our love ever perfect never decreases, but always augments.'

Then said abbot John, 'Good lady, I humbly entreat thee to guide me and my companions who have wandered into this unknown and narrow place, and to set us in the road towards the city, where by the help of God these monks are to receive orders; and I ask thee to do this for the love of thy friends at Byland, whence we also come.' And she replied, 'You say truly that you belong to Byland, but as a part belongs to the whole, as members to the head. For you were of Byland, but now you are of Joreval.' And as she named Joreval he marvelled, and said, 'Good lady, lead us to Joreval, for it is thither we are going.' Then looking at her Son she said, 'Sweetest Son, for the love wherewith thou hast ever loved me, be a guide to these brethren who are our friends, for I am called elsewhere.' And so saying she departed. But the Child, holding out the branch which he had plucked in the cloister of Byland, with a clear voice and smiling countenance said, 'Have confidence, and follow me.' And they did so, walking through rough and difficult ways, yet without feeling fatigue. And behold! an infinite number of little birds, as small as sparrows, and of unspeakable whiteness, flew down on to the bough which the Child held, and there continued singing the hymn *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino*, whereby they were

so much refreshed, that they felt neither weariness nor difficulty of any kind from their journey. At last they reached a wild uncultivated spot where the Child planted his branch in the earth with the birds singing on it, and said, 'Here very soon God will be adored and invoked,' and as it seemed in a moment, the hand grew into a great tree all covered with white birds. 'Rest here,' continued the Child, 'and restore your strength, for you can see from hence the place whither you are going, and the way leading thereto has been sufficiently shewn you.' And with that he disappeared.

Now abbot John slept but little after this, but lay awake revolving these things in his mind, wondering much, and greatly consoled at the vision. Very early in the morning he and his monks arose, and having said their matins, they proceeded by the light of the moon and stars. About day-break they entered a village, the inhabitants of which were just rising, and hearing a great barking of dogs, some of them looked out of their windows into the road, and seeing a number of men passing by, clothed in white, one of them said, 'Who are all these white men going by?' Then abbot John stood under the shadow of the wall that he might hear what further would be said about them; and another man made answer and said: 'Yesterday I was told that an abbot and twelve monks were about to remove from Byland to Joreval;' which a third man hearing, went out of the house with great joy, and gazing a little at the moon, the stars, and the signs of the firmament, he said: 'These good men have removed at a happy time, for within a brief space, that is to say within thirty or forty years, they will attain to much prosperity, and enjoy abundance of all temporal things.' Having heard these words abbot John proceeded on his way rejoicing, and comforting his companions as well with the words of the simple man as at the revelation he had before received. This narrative, continues Richard, he who reads may interpret as he wills; it suffices to me to relate it simply as I have heard it told by our elders, and that not once, but many times.'

Two other Cistercian abbeys owed their foundation to vows made by English princes to the Blessed Virgin in a moment of extreme peril. One of these was the abbey of Vale Royal

in Cheshire founded by King Edward I., who during the lifetime of his father returning to England from some foreign expedition, was in danger of shipwreck. And as they every moment expected to be swallowed up by the waves the prince proposed to his companions that each one should make some promise to God, whatever the Spirit of God might inspire. The storm however continued to rage, until the prince, believing that their last hour was come, humbly vowed to God and the Blessed Virgin, that if they reached land in safety he would build a Cistercian abbey in honour of Our Lady and endow it with revenues for the support of a hundred monks. Scarcely had he pronounced the words, than the wind subsided, and the ship, which was so shattered and broken that the water was rushing in through many leaks, nevertheless was as it were miraculously brought safe to the shore, which they beholding, gave thanks to the Glorious Virgin who suffers not her votaries to perish. The prince was the last to leave the vessel, and as soon as he had set his foot on land, it parted in two and was swallowed up in the waves.

This event took place it would seem before the commencement of the Barons' Wars, for the Abbey register goes on to tell us that after his arrival in England, the quarrel between King Henry and his barons having broken out, Prince Edward was taken prisoner and confined in the city of Hereford, at which time he received much help and comfort from the monks of Dore and calling to mind his vow, he resolved on regaining his liberty to choose his community out of their number. The new foundation was first of all placed on his own manor of Dernhale, but was afterwards removed to Kingsdale or Vale Royal, a spot which had before been the habitation of robbers, and bore the name of Munchenwro.

Yet bad as was the previous reputation of the place, miraculous signs had not been wanting, which seemed to indicate that it had been chosen to become a holy sanctuary. Men said that they had heard from their fathers how many years before the foundation of the abbey, when the valley was still a vast and wild solitude, the shepherds who fed their flocks there had been wont on all solemn feasts of the Blessed Mother of God to hear voices as if singing in the air, and a clear shining light

appeared on the spot, which turned night into day ; moreover they heard as it seemed the sweet chiming of bells. And after the church was built the country people beheld it surrounded with light as if it were on fire, so that great numbers ran together to extinguish the conflagration.

In 1277, King Edward himself laid the first stone of the new abbey, two other stones being laid by Queen Eleanor of Castile, one for herself, and the other for her infant son Alphonso. But the monks did not take possession of this monastery till the feast of the Assumption 1330, continuing to reside in some temporary buildings erected by the king until the completion of the grander pile. The ceremony was attended by such a concourse of people that the abbey walls could hardly contain all the guests. There was a plentiful feast provided and music of all kinds, and all did their best to honour Her in whose name this new sanctuary had been dedicated as a perpetual remembrance of the deliverance she had granted to her clients. One incident is remarked by the historian and piously interpreted by him as a sign of Our Lady's favour. For forty days before the feast, he says, there had been such torrents of rain that the whole country round about was flooded, and you would have thought that the deluge of Noe was coming again on the earth, but on the vigil of the Assumption, and during the two following days, the air cleared, and not a drop of rain fell. But so soon as everything was over and the guests had departed it began again, and continued as heavily as before. Who can doubt, he asks, that this serenity of the air was a sign that the Sacred Virgin rejoiced at the coming of her monks to this place, saying, 'Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it,' for it is surely of such as them that those other words are written in the Apocalypse, 'They shall walk with me in white robes, for they are worthy.'

It only remains to add that King Edward amply fulfilled his vow, and that the endowments of his abbey were worthy of a royal foundation. But besides his gifts of lands and revenues he bestowed upon the monks one donation hardly less precious in their eyes. This was a piece of the True Cross which he brought with him from the Holy Land after his return from the Crusade and which the historian calls a '*pulcherrimam*

portionem,' adding that this most religious king had been accustomed to wear it round his bare neck in all his battles, and that by virtue of it he overcame all his enemies. He added also a great number of other relics 'canonically approved,' as well as a profusion of sacred vessels, books and vestments.

The other Cistercian sanctuary which owed its erection to the gratitude of a Plantagenet king towards Our Blessed Lady, was that which bore the title of Our Lady of Graces by the Tower and was founded by King Edward III. in 1349, partly in consequence of a vow he had made owing to a storm at sea, and partly, as we learn from the charter of his son Richard II., in gratitude for the many and abundant graces and deliverances from perils by sea and by land which he had received from the clemency of Our Lord Christ through the intercession of His Ever-Blessed Mother, humbly desiring to make this foundation to their honour and in memory of the aforesaid favours. It appears to have been in this church that the celebrated image of Our Lady was preserved to which Sir Thomas More alludes in one of his letters when praising the affability of King Henry VIII., he says, 'He is so courteous to all that every one may find somewhat whereby he may imagine that he loves him; even as do the citizens' wives of London who think that Our Lady's image near the Tower doth smile on them as they pray before it.' *

* The instances here given of vows made by our Plantagenet kings in consequence of deliverances attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin might be largely multiplied. Not only Oriel College, Oxford, but the Carmelite convent in the same city, was founded by Edward II., in consequence of a vow made when escaping at the peril of his life from the field of Bannockburn. The devotion of Richard Cœur de Lion to the Blessed Virgin was chiefly shown by his donations to her sanctuaries in Normandy in thanksgiving for numberless graces. One of them is related by Roger Hovedon, who says that during the siege of Acre Our Lady appeared to certain of the sentinels in the Crusading camp, and bade them tell the kings of France and England that they might cease the battering of the walls, for that on the fourth day they should be in possession of the town, which came to pass as had been promised. Richard's great victory gained over the Turks by the river Rochetaile on the eve of Our Lady's Nativity, was likewise regarded as obtained through her intercession. The Abbey of Westminster contained a

Besides these abbeys, we may notice Hales' Abbey in Gloucestershire, founded under similar circumstances by Richard Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans, and dedicated to Our Lady in fulfilment of a vow made during a tempest at sea. This abbey was rendered famous by the gift of a relic of the Precious Blood placed here by Edmund, son and heir of Earl Richard. And in connection with these stories of deliverances from shipwreck may be given an anecdote which occurs in the MS. history of Dieulacres Abbey in Staffordshire. This Cistercian abbey was founded in 1214 by Randal Earl of Chester, who soon after returning from the Holy Land, where he had performed many glorious deeds, was overtaken by a storm, and in great danger of perishing. In the midst of their distress, he asked the sailors what time it was, and they replying that it wanted about two hours to midnight, he made them work on with courage for those two hours, saying that he had a confident hope the storm would then abate. Far from abating however, it grew worse, and at last the pilot said, 'Sir, commend your soul to God, for the tempest increases and we can scarce any longer hold the oars.' Then the earl arose and began with all his might to help with the oars and sails, and soon after the weather became calm.

The next day, the captain of the ship begged the earl to tell them why he had desired them to work on during those two hours, and why he had afterwards helped them himself more than any one else who had been in the ship. 'It was,' he replied, 'because I knew that at midnight my monks, and those whom my ancestors also had founded in divers places, would arise to sing the divine office, and therefore I had confidence in their prayers, and trusted right well that God through their suffrages would give me a strength at that hour which I did not possess before.'

The last illustration of our subject which I will draw from the Cistercian annals, belongs to a period subsequent to the

celebrated image of Our Lady much esteemed by the Plantagenets, of which Froissart says that 'it worked *many fine miracles*.' It was before this image that Richard II. prayed on the day that he rode to Smithfield to meet Wat Tyler and the rebellious commons.

Protestant Reformation, but the circumstance, occurring as it did, in an age little sensible to the instincts of faith, is only the more deserving of credence. Nicholas Fagan, an Irishman by birth, took the habit of religion in the famous Cistercian abbey of Ferrara in Castile in the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign. After some years he was sent back to Ireland, where, though exposed to many dangers and more than once beaten, ill-used, and wounded by his enemies, he nevertheless managed to preserve his life, which he spent in apostolic labours. He was very desirous of promoting the devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a powerful means of restoring and strengthening the Catholic faith, and for this purpose he placed an image of Our Lady which he had brought with him from Seville in an oratory attached to the hospital of St. John in the city of Waterford, where numbers of Catholics devoutly resorted, in whose behalf, says Don Gaspar Jongelino (in his work entitled the *Porpora di S. Bernardo*) Our Lord through the intercession of his Blessed Mother worked many and astounding miracles. There was a certain man who lived in the county of Kilkenny whose arm had been withered from his birth so that he could not so much as move it. One night the Mother of God appeared to him, and commanded him to go to Waterford and visit her image preserved in St. John's Hospital, promising him if he did so, the restoration of his arm. On awaking he resolved to obey what he believed to be a Divine revelation, and setting out the same day for Waterford he acquainted Father Fagan with the reason of his visit. The good father bade him wait till the next day, when he would say Mass and recommend his cure to God. In the morning a considerable number of Catholics assembled in the oratory where Father Fagan said Mass, and at the moment of the elevation, the man felt his hand suddenly and perfectly restored, so that he at once used it by fervently striking his breast. Not wishing, however, to cause any disturbance at that moment by declaring what had happened, he held his peace till the end of the Mass, when he raised his arm now as healthy and whole as the other, and proclaimed his cure to all present.

Another miracle of a somewhat different character, yet

further increased the veneration of the Catholics for this holy image, which they visited in such throngs that the little oratory was never without some pious votary. A certain Catholic of the neighbourhood who retained the faith, but unhappily followed a very disorderly life, had stolen some necklaces of great value, but not so secretly as to escape suspicion. He was accused of the crime but swore to his innocence, and the fact was not proved against him. In company with several persons who had been present when he took the false oath, he went to hear Mass in St. John's oratory before the holy image. In the midst of the Mass the necklaces fell at his feet, without anyone perceiving from whence they came. The thief finding himself detected, fell on his knees, and confessed his crime, receiving a severe reproof from the venerable servant of God.*

Nicholas Fagan was afterwards elected Bishop of Waterford, but died in 1616, before receiving consecration. His tomb is still to be seen in the church of Waterford bearing an inscription in Latin verse, and his memory is commemorated in the Cistercian Menology on March 8.

The Premonstratensian Order was introduced into England about the same time with the Cistercian, and like it, claimed in a very special way to be under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, from whose hands St. Norbert was said to have received the white habit. By far the greater number of its monasteries were dedicated in her honour and in the histories of their early foundation we frequently meet with legends of a similar nature to those already quoted. Certain localities were believed to have been selected by Our Lady for her own sanctuaries, and among these was the valley known as Depedale, in Derbyshire, where afterwards arose the Premonstratensian abbey known as Dale Abbey, or Stanley Park.

* Wading, in his 'Annals,' mentions a miraculous image preserved at the Franciscan convent at Tralee, built about the year 1440 by Lord McCarthy, concerning which a very similar story is told of the discovery of a theft. This image continued to be venerated until the reign of Elizabeth, when it was concealed in a withered tree, which thereupon is said to have produced leaves, boughs and flowers, whereby the holy image was more perfectly hidden from the view of the heretics.

The circumstances of its early history are thus related. There lived in Derby, in the street that bore Our Lady's name, a certain miller named Cornelius, who was accustomed every Saturday to bring to St. Mary's parish church all the money he had earned, except what was absolutely necessary for his maintenance, and there to distribute it to the poor for the love of God and Our Lady. He persevered in this laudable habit for many years, and at last one day in autumn as he was taking some rest at midday, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him in his sleep, and said to him, 'Cornelius, my Son has accepted thine alms. But if thou wouldst be perfect leave all that thou hast, and go to Depedale and there serve me and my Son in a solitary life, and when thy course is ended thou shalt be admitted to eternal joys.' Awakening from slumber Cornelius gave thanks to God and Our Lady, and saying nothing to any man, prepared without delay to obey the heavenly vision. He set out, not knowing where Depedale was, but confident in the divine guidance. And taking his way towards the east, as he passed through the village of Stanley he heard a woman say to her daughter, 'Take our cows and drive them to Depedale, and make haste home again.' Full of wonder, he approached the woman saying, 'I pray thee, good woman, tell me where Depedale is.' 'Go with the girl if you will,' she replied, 'and she will show you the way.' He followed the girl therefore, and her cows, till they came to a certain solitary valley covered with forest and far from all human habitation, where finding out a sheltered spot, he scooped himself out of the rock a little hermitage wherein he made himself an altar, and there served God in hunger and thirst, cold, and the want of all things.

The lands round about belonged to Ralph FitzGeremund, who had lately returned into England from Normandy, and visiting the neighbourhood came to this valley one day with his dogs seeking for game, and perceiving the smoke rising out of the good hermit's cave, he was filled with indignation and wonder that any man should presume to make himself a habitation in his forest. Going to the spot, therefore, he found Cornelius clad in old ragged garments, and his heart was touched with compunction, so that having heard who he was and the story of his coming thither, he not only freely gave

him leave to remain but granted him the tenth of the produce of his mills for his support. The history goes on to relate the many combats which the hermit had afterwards to sustain from the ghostly enemy, and how eventually he removed to another part of the same valley near a spring of water, and there built himself a hut, and an oratory dedicated to Blessed Mary wherein he some years afterwards happily passed to the Lord. The oratory of St. Mary's was afterwards given to some black canons, and finally William FitzRauf and his daughter Matilda bestowed the valley and its appurtenances on a colony of Premonstratensians in the year 1204.

Two more of these monastic legends shall be added, of which the first carries us back to the days of the crusaders. Shortly after the Norman Conquest the lands of Wroxhall in Warwickshire were held by Richard, lord of Hatton, whose son Sir Hugh was a man of great stature and valour, and took part in the first crusade wherein 'the Holy Land was conquered by Christian people out of heathen men's domination by sore wars.' In this war Sir Hugh was taken prisoner and kept by the heathen people with great durance for seven years, till at last weary of his tribulations he remembered himself that his parish church in England was dedicated to St. Leonard, and calling to mind the many miracles wrought by that holy confessor, he made his complaint full piteously to him, laying before him how in his youth he had ever had great devotion to him, and on his feast had fed both poor and rich, and beseeching him to come to his aid now that he was taken prisoner in the cause of God. In his sleep St. Leonard appeared to him clad in the habit of a black monk, and bade him rise and go home and found a place for nuns of St. Bennet's Order. And soon after he appeared to him a second time not sleeping but waking, whereat the knight joyful with weeping and spiritual gladness vowed to fulfil the saint's behest; and suddenly found himself with his chains set down in Wroxhall Wood, at the east end of what was afterwards the chancel of the church, fast by his own manor. He did not at first know where he was, 'and as it happened there came by one of his own shepherds, and for the grisly sight of him the man was sore feared

and charged him in God's name to tell him what he was.' The knight, greatly comforted to hear the English speech, said he was truly a man, and asking where he was, marvelled to find that he was on his own land. Then he enquired concerning his wife and children and heard what alms and prayers were done daily for his release, and that many vows had been offered to Our Lady and other saints. Then heartily thanking God, Our Lady, and St. Leonard, the knight bade the man bring the lady thither with her children. She accordingly came to the spot and on first seeing him knew him not but 'feared for the grisly sight of him.' But he drew out half a ring, and reminded her how on their parting they had broken that ring together, and each kept a part, and when the two parts were brought together again they exactly joined. The lady recognising him at last to be indeed her lost husband swooned for joy, but they loosed him from his chains and so proceeded to the church, where after giving thanks to God, Our Lady, and St. Leonard, Sir Hugh declared his vow, and his purpose to fulfil it. Desiring to know from God where the church should be built, it is added 'that stones without man's hand were pitched on the ground,' and the altar stood on the spot where he was first discovered. The ring before spoken of was still preserved among the relics at the time when the writer of this account was living, together with a portion of Sir Hugh's chains, the rest having been put into the bells. The founder's two daughters, Edith and Cleopatra, were the first nuns, 'a lady from the house of Wilton' coming to inform them in holy religion.

To the foundation of the Lady chapel belonging to this church is attached a legend no less miraculous than that which we have just related. Dame Alice Craft, one of the nuns, 'poor of worldly goods but rich in virtues,' desired greatly that she might live to see a chapel built here to Our Lady. 'To that intent she oftentimes prayed; and one night there came a voice to her, bidding her in the name of God and Our Lady to begin and perform Our Lady's chapel.' She thought it a dream and took no heed thereof, till the same charge was given her a second time, and more sharply. Then she awoke and fell into a great weeping, not having wherewith

to do it, and informed her prioress, who treated the whole as an idle phantasy. But at last Our Lady herself appeared to Dame Alice, and blamed her so sharply for her negligence that in great fear she hastened to her prioress and entreated her to believe the vision. The prioress, somewhat moved by her words, asked her how much she had towards it, and she replied fifteen pence. 'Then,' said the prioress, 'though it be little, Our Lady may full well increase it,' and so she gave her leave to begin.

'Then this Dame Alice gave herself to prayers, and besought Our Lady to give her knowledge where she should build it and how large she should make it. Then she was told by revelation to make it on the north side of the church, where she should find the size marked out. This was in harvest-time, between the two feasts of Our Lady (that is, between the Assumption and the Nativity); and on the morrow early, she went unto the place assigned to her, and there she found a certain space of ground *covered with snow*; and there the snow abode from four of the clock in the morning until noon. She, glad of this, had masons ready, and marked out the ground, and built the chapel, and performed it up. And every Saturday whilst it was in building she would say her prayers in the alleys of the churchyard, and in the plain path she found weekly, silver sufficient to pay her workmen, and all that was behoofull to her work, and no more.'

This good lady, Dame Alice Craft, adds the narrator, died 'the vii. calends of February on the morrow after the Conversion of St. Paul,' and lies buried under a stone in the same chapel before the door leading into her quire. She was, he says, a woman of great stature, 'as beseeming of her bones.' *

The other story referred to is also attached to the foundation of an English nunnery, that of Godstow in Oxfordshire, which owed its erection to the following circumstances, as related in the book of the register. In the reign of King Henry I., a certain devout widow of Winchester named Editha was oftentimes warned in a vision to go to the neighbourhood of Oxford and abide there until such time as a sign should be given her from God, in what wise she should build a house for his service.

* From the history printed in Dugdale's 'Monasticon,' from a MS. supposed to have been written about the time of Edward IV.

She accordingly chose the village of Binsey, then a very famous place of devotion, both as having an image of St. Frideswide, to which much pilgrimage was made, as also for the Holy Well of St. Margaret. So great was the throng of pious visitors, that twenty-four inns for their accommodation were erected at Seckworth on the opposite side of the river, and a great number of priests were stationed here to hear the confessions of the pilgrims. Here therefore Editha took up her residence, 'and much holy life she led,' until one night she heard a voice which said to her, 'Editha, arise, and without abiding, go ye there where the light of heaven alighteth to the earth from the firmament, and there ordain ye mynchyns (nuns) to the service of God, xxiiij of the most gentlewomen that ye shall find.'

The spot indicated by this miraculous sign was situated on the river Isis about two miles from Oxford in the near vicinity of Binsey, and here Editha in 1138 built her church and convent of Godstow, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and St. John Baptist. King Stephen and his Queen assisted at the consecration, and an indulgence of forty days was granted to all those who should devoutly visit the church on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin or St. John.

4.—Sanctuaries of Our Lady of which mention occurs in the Lives of English Saints.

IN the present chapter we propose noticing a few of those passages which occur in early English historians, or in the lives of our native saints, wherein allusion is made to churches or images of Our Lady the precise locality of which is not always given. Our early biographies and histories are full of such allusions, and much as we should desire to be furnished with more exact information regarding these ancient sanctuaries, the imperfect accounts which are all that are left us, suffice to show how numerous they were, and how deeply rooted was the devotion with which they were regarded by the populace.

And first we may instance some of the legends of the early life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, who appears to have acquired

his very special devotion to the Blessed Virgin from the teaching of his mother. One of the modes by which she displayed her devotion was common enough in Catholic England, and singularly characteristic of old English piety, wherein, mingled with what was tender and even poetical, there was generally to be found a certain homely simplicity, which always contrived to keep in mind the alliance between prayer and almsdeeds.

The saint's mother was used to put her son at certain times into the scales, and to weigh him with clothes, meat, bread, and money, which were placed in the opposite scale. These things were then distributed to the poor, and her intention was by this act to commend him to the protection of God, and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin. For, says Roger de Pontigny, 'among the works of piety that she exercised, she had a very special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and carefully taught her son (as he was accustomed oftentimes to say) to fear God, and to love and venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary with special devotion, and to invoke her as his patroness and mistress of all his life and acts, and to make her his hope next to Our Lord Christ.'

We are told that in his youth Thomas received some very precious marks of Our Lady's favour: one was, that being ill of a fever she appeared to him, promised him that he should recover, and placed in his hands two golden keys, as if to indicate his future greatness. The other occurred when he was at school, we are not told whether at Merton or in London, but the incident plainly belongs to the period of his boyhood. Playing with some other youths of his own age, his companions began to praise, some one, and some another fair lady of their acquaintance, and after the fashion of the times to exhibit the gloves or other 'favours' which they had received from the object of their admiration, or which they wore in her honour. But Thomas being required to show the like, answered that he had given his heart to a dame of far higher degree, and being twitted by his comrades to show some token of her favour, he retired into a church and praying before an image of the Blessed Virgin, who was in truth the Lady to whom he had vowed his love, he returned

to his schoolfellows with a glowing countenance as one who had been granted a heavenly grace, and exhibited to them a little box containing a cope of a red colour (a token apparently of his future dignity and martyrdom), which he declared to them was the pledge of affection which he had received from the lady of his heart.

Another story in his life has the same homely and familiar character before noted. The gay youth of whom his biographer says, that he cared for nothing so much as dogs and birds, was even from his boyhood addicted to secret acts of penance. When primate of Canterbury he was accustomed to wear a hair shirt under his costly garments, and once, it is said, the hair shirt requiring mending, the saint was both unable to do this himself and unwilling to call in the aid of others, lest the secret of that austerity which he so jealously concealed from the world at large, should become blazed abroad. And on this occasion, says his biographer, Our Lady came to his aid, and sewed the hair shirt with her own hands.

The favourite devotion with which St. Thomas was accustomed to invoke his great Patroness, was the salutation of her seven joys, and we read how on one occasion Our Lady appeared to him, and after assuring him that his homage was most pleasing to her, enquired of him why he only commemorated her joys on earth, and not also those which formed her crown in heaven; and he replying that he knew not which they were, she made known to him her seven heavenly joys, after which time the saint constantly honoured them, and composed the rhythm, formerly sung in some churches, and entitled '*Gaude flore virginali.*' After the martyrdom of the saint, when every memorial of his life and death was held dear at Canterbury, the great window of the west transept of the cathedral was filled with a splendid representation of the seven joys of Our Lady, together with the figures of the martyred prelate, and all the patron saints of England. The description of this window is left written by the very hand that destroyed it, that namely of Richard Calmer, or Blue Dick, as he was termed by the cavaliers, one of the six preachers of the cathedral during the time of the Commonwealth. In his report of his proceedings, he informs us that

‘ the commissioners fell to work on this great idolatrous window whereon many thousand pounds had been expended by outlandish papists. In that window were representations of the Holy Trinity, and of the twelve apostles, and seven large pictures of the Virgin Mary, in seven several glorious appearances : as of the angel lifting her into heaven, and the sun, moon, and stars, under her feet ; and every picture had under it an inscription beginning with *Gaude Maria*, as, *Gaude Maria, Sponsa Dei*. And at the foot of that huge window was a title intimating that the window was dedicated to the Virgin Mary : *In laudem et honorem Beatissimæ Virginis Mariæ Matris Dei*.’

It might be thought that the ‘ seven glorious appearances ’ had at least impressed the mind of this sacrilegious fanatic with some feeling of admiration, yet he appears to have been chiefly possessed with a sense of satisfaction at having been able to stand at the top of the city ladder, pike in hand, when no one else present would venture to the giddy height, whence, as he expresses it, he was able to ‘ rattle down proud Becket’s glassy bones.’

We will next pass on to the legends recorded in the lives of two saints, contemporaries of St. Thomas, namely, St. Godric of Finchdale, and St. Laurence of Dublin. The former of these, a simple uneducated pedlar, after spending many years in devout pilgrimages to the holy places of Jerusalem, Rome and Compostella, retired to a wilderness near Durham, where he lived a holy angelic life, the account of which has been written by those who were eye-witnesses of his sanctity. On the walls of his hermit’s cell hung a crucifix, and an image of the Blessed Virgin, which, as his biographer tells us, were made the instruments of many marvellous favours. That poor hermitage was repeatedly visited by angels and saints, as well as by the Queen of angels, who on one occasion is said to have appeared to Godric in company with St. Mary Magdalen, and placing her hand on his head, to have taught him the hymn, known as ‘ St. Godric’s hymn.’

The name of St. Laurence is associated with two sanctuaries of Our Lady, one in Dublin, and another in Wales, the history of which is related in the exceedingly beautiful and interesting

life of the saint preserved by Surius, but without any particulars which would enable us to decide their precise locality. St. Laurence many times visited England, and on one of these occasions returning from the court of Henry II. into his own country, he came to a certain sea-port in Wales, the name of which is not preserved, and was there detained by unfavourable winds. There was in the neighbourhood a church which had been recently built in honour of the Blessed Virgin, by a rich man of the country, but in consequence of the absence of the bishop of the diocese, it had not yet been consecrated. A certain hermit or ankret had constructed himself a cell attached to this church, in which he abode that he might serve God more freely. To him the Blessed Virgin appeared in the night, richly adorned, and with a majestic countenance, and enquired of him why her church had not yet been consecrated. And the ankret replying that it was because of the absence of the bishop, she made answer, 'I will not have it consecrated by him, but by Laurence of Dublin, for whose coming I have been waiting, that he, and none but he, might dedicate my church. And this shall be a sign to him, for he shall not obtain a favourable wind until he has done my pleasure.' The hermit awoke, amazed with the vision; and as soon as it was day he sent for the lord of the adjoining castle who had founded the church, and declared to him what had taken place. He at once went to the archbishop, invited him to his castle, and receiving him honourably, made him a feast, and implored him to deign to consecrate the church. But the holy man replied that he could not do this in the diocese of another, and remained unmoved by all the prayers of his host. Then the latter related to him the vision of the ankret, and all the words of the Blessed Virgin, till Laurence, convinced that it was indeed the will of God, and that the thing was not unlawful, but rather enjoined, the next day consecrated the church. And so soon as the Mass and other holy rites were ended, and he had tasted bread, he entered into his ship, and with a favourable wind set sail for his own land. And from that time innumerable miracles were performed, and divine graces and favours poured out in this church.

On another occasion as he was about to set out for England,

and had already got on board the vessel, some of the citizens of Dublin joined him, believing themselves sure of escaping the perils of the sea, if they sailed in his company. However, they had not proceeded far before a great tempest arose, whereupon they all gathered round their holy pastor, imploring him by his prayers to deliver them from the death that appeared to threaten them. But he encouraged them, assuring them that if they followed his counsel, not one of them should perish. 'You know,' he said, 'that we are even now building a church in Dublin, in honour of the Mother of God. Promise therefore to give to this work bountifully of the fruit of those things which He has given to you, and I will promise you on the part of God, a tranquil sea, and a safe voyage.' They at once made the required promise, offering their alms to the archbishop with a good and ready will; for the ship was loaded with their merchandise. Then the heavens cleared, the sea grew calm, and they reached land in safety, praising God and his holy servant.

But whilst speaking of the graces received from Our Blessed Lady by English saints, it is impossible to pass over without notice one which stands out pre-eminent, both from its world-wide celebrity, and the lasting traces which it has left on the devotion of Catholics not in England alone, but throughout the whole of Catholic Christendom. I allude of course to the giving of the Carmelite scapular to St. Simon Stock. The Order of Mount Carmel, whose glory it is to be called the Order of the Blessed Virgin, has some peculiar claims on the interest of English Catholics. England was the first European country which gave shelter to its religious, when driven by the persecution of the Saracens out of the Holy Land. It was to an Englishman, and on English soil, that the Ever-Blessed Virgin gave the scapular with her own hands. In England the devotion of the scapular took its origin and received its first extension, and in England also the first miraculous favour was granted to the use of that devotion.

It was in the reign of Henry III., that two English knights, John Lord Vesey and Richard Lord Grey, having gone to the Holy Wars, visited Mount Carmel in devout pilgrimage, and were there surprised to find several of their countrymen lead-

ing an eremitical life. Charmed with the sanctity of these hermits they obtained leave to take back some of them to England, among whom were Ralph Freburn, formerly a gentleman of Northumberland, and Ivo, or Alamon, a native of Brittany. The two noble founders granted them lands in their own immediate neighbourhood. Lord Grey of Codnor gave the site for a convent at Aylesford in Kent, on a spot close to the river Medway, where portions of the ancient buildings may still be seen. Lord Vesey planted his colony at Holn, in the forest of Alnwick in Northumberland, and these were the first Carmelite houses erected in Europe. Ralph Freburn became first English provincial, and gave the habit to Simon Stock, who up to that time had lived as a hermit in one of the Kentish woods. Hardly had the friars been settled in England before they took measures for establishing themselves at the two universities, and Simon Stock was taking his degree at Oxford as Bachelor of Divinity at the very time that Humphrey Neckton, another Carmelite, became first professor of the Order at Cambridge. Simon's distinguished merit procured his election as general of the whole Order at the first general chapter, which was held at Aylesford in Kent in the year 1245. Four years later, in 1249, Michael Malsherb gave the friars a certain habitation at Newenham, outside the town of Cambridge, where they continued forty-two years, afterwards removing to a house which stood near the present site of Queen's College. But this removal did not take place until the year 1291, and it must therefore have been at Newenham that the celebrated vision took place, which is assigned by the historians of the Order to the date of 1251, and declared by them to have occurred in the oratory of the Carmelite convent at Cambridge. For it is said, as St. Simon prayed in this oratory the Blessed Virgin appeared to him holding the sacred scapular in her hand, and bestowed it on him saying: 'Receive this scapular, the sign of my confraternity, a privilege to thee and to thine Order; in which he that dieth shall not suffer eternal fire; a sign of salvation, a safeguard in danger, the seal of an everlasting covenant.'*

* We have already said more than once, that in detailing these traditions of a supernatural character, it is not intended to pass any decision on

It is certain that St. Simon was himself the first to propagate the devotion of the scapular in England, for he gave it not merely to religious persons but to laymen, among whom were the two kings, Edward I. and his unfortunate son Edward II. And it is worth our notice that the first miracle recorded as having taken place in connection with the scapular was wrought in the person of a layman whom the saint enrolled in the confraternity. Having gone to visit the Bishop of Winchester on business connected with his Order, he had no sooner arrived in the city than the dean of St. Helen's parish church came to him beseeching him to come and assist a brother of his named Walter, who lay in a miserable state, dying as it seemed in despair of salvation, and obstinately refusing so much as to hear of sacred things. St. Simon hastened to the bedside of the poor man, whom he found bereft of reason, grinding his teeth, and with a hideous convulsed countenance. After recommending him to God in earnest prayer, he placed the scapular round his neck, which was no sooner done, than the sick man returned to himself, and presently begging pardon of God with great contrition and many tears received all the sacraments of Holy Church with the utmost devotion, and peacefully expired the same night. It is added that the dean being still in great doubt of his brother's salvation, on account of the irregularity of his former life, the dead man appeared to him, and assured him that the graces he had received by the receiving of that holy habit had enabled him to escape the snares of the enemy and

their several claims to authenticity. But it must be remarked that this particular vision of St. Simon Stock has been more formally approved as certain than most legends of a similar kind. 'We believe this vision to be true,' writes Pope Benedict XIV., 'and that all ought to consider it as such. It is very precisely related by Swaynton, the companion and secretary of the blessed Simon, who declares that he heard it from his mouth. "This, I, unworthy, have written from the dictation of the man of God." The autograph was preserved in the archives of Bordeaux, and was brought to light when the controversy on those subjects was taking place' (Bened. XIV. 'De Festis,' tom. ii. cap. 6). In one old legend of St. Simon Stock it is added that Our Lady, when giving the scapular to the saint, declared that the land of England was her dowry, and that she held it under her singular protection.

had procured him the happiness of dying in the grace of God. Such is the story as we read it in the life of St. Simon, and it receives a certain confirmation from the fact that the name of Peter, parish priest of St. Helen's, Winchester, appears as the founder of the Carmelite convent which was erected in that city in the year 1278.

England was not so happy as to give a place of sepulture to her saintly son, who in 1266 died at Bordeaux, where it is believed his body still lies interred. But his Order always preserved a high place in the esteem of his countrymen, and the brown scapular so dear and familiar to ourselves hung on the breast of many an English baron, such as Thomas the martyred Earl of Lancaster, as he was called, and Henry Earl of Northumberland. A story is related by Francis Potel in his book *De Origine et Antiquitate Ordinis Carmel*, which, as bearing on the subject of English miraculous images, I shall quote in this place. There was a convent of Carmelites in the city of Chester, who according to the custom of the Order were wont to style themselves brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. Some of the citizens took offence at the use of this title, and spoke many injurious and contemptuous words of the friars, saying that they were rather worthy to be called brothers of Mary of Egypt.* But within a few days those who had so spoken were seized with divers sicknesses, many of them died, and such evident signs of divine displeasure seemed to threaten the city, that the abbot of St. Werburgh's ordered a solemn procession to be made, to appease the wrath of God. In this procession the Carmelites took part

* This dispute continued to cause a great deal of trouble to the friars for many years, until the university of Cambridge, which never forgot its early connection with the Order, appointed a commission of learned men, headed by their chancellor, John Donewick, to examine into the claims of the Carmelites to antiquity. The result was that on February 23, 1374, they published the following decree: 'We, having heard the various reasons and allegations, and moreover having seen, read, heard, and examined the privileges, chronicles and ancient writings of the said Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, do pronounce, determine and declare (as is manifest to us by the said histories and other ancient writings), that the brothers of this Order are really the imitators and successors of the holy prophets Elias and Eliseus.'

together with other religious orders, and as they passed a certain wooden image of the Blessed Virgin, which was held in great veneration in that city, many of them saluted it, bowing their heads and repeating the Ave Maria. Then it was seen by all, that the holy image returned their salutation, bowing its head also and extending its hand towards the Carmelites, and some even affirmed that they distinctly heard a voice three times pronounce the words, 'Behold my brothers.' This event is said to have taken place in the year 1317, in the reign of Edward II. And here we may remark the singular favour shown to the Carmelite order by that unfortunate monarch, who, as has been before said, himself received the scapular. When setting out for Scotland, to prosecute the war which terminated with the battle of Bannockburn, he took with him a certain Carmelite friar, named Robert Baston, who when the king was in great peril of being taken by the victorious Scots, promised him safety if he made some vow to Our Blessed Lady. Edward followed his counsel and vowed, should he escape, to build a house of her Order in England. In fulfilment of this vow he gave his manor house at Oxford to the Carmelite friars, by a royal deed published by him at York, wherein he declares this grant to be made 'for the devotion which we bear to the glorious Virgin Mary and for the fulfilling of a certain vow, which we made being in danger.'

Pursuing the traces to be found in English hagiology, indicating the existence of many sanctuaries, venerated as the scenes of miraculous graces, we may quote a notice which occurs in the *Chronologia Benedictino-Mariana*, wherein mention is made of a monk named Guntelin, who flourished in England about the year 1299. In the early part of his life he had been renowned for strength of body, but was also unhappily notorious for his vicious life. From this he was recalled however by a vision in which he beheld the sufferings of the damned and the joys of the blessed; after which it seemed to him that he was conducted to a certain chapel where the Blessed Virgin appeared in great splendour, together with the holy Patriarch St. Benedict. The latter having according to monastic custom, said '*Benedicite*,' and Our Lady answering '*Dominus*,' St.

Benedict addressed her in these words : ‘ Behold, O Lady, the novice whom thou hast commanded me to bring hither.’ And she addressing Guntelin, said, ‘ Art thou willing to live with me, and serve me in my house?’ to which he replied that he was. ‘ Swear then on this altar,’ she continued, ‘ that thou wilt ever serve me, and keep the commandments of God.’ And he took the required oath, whereupon the Blessed Virgin desired St. Benedict to reconduct him whence he came. From that time Guntelin entering the monastic state, entirely changed his life, and by his fidelity to his promise, deserved to be ranked among the blessed.

Again we read of a certain Dominican friar of the convent of Our Lady in Derby, who was attacked with sudden illness whilst in the neighbouring house of the Franciscans, and on his death-bed showed such extraordinary gestures of reverence as though to some personage present of exalted dignity, that those who stood around him, enquired the cause. ‘ This house,’ he replied, ‘ is full of angels, and there are here present the glorious St. Edward our king, and Our Lady, whom let us salute.’ The fathers, hearing him speak thus, intoned the *Salve Regina*, which being ended, he smiled and said : ‘ Oh, how acceptable was your salutation to the Queen of heaven, for lo ! as she listened to you, she smiled.’ This anecdote is related both by Taegius and Gerard Frachetti, historians of the Order of Preachers, and assigned by them to the year 1251.

Both Oxford and Cambridge had their famous images of Our Lady ; that at Oxford being rendered memorable by the devotion of St. Edmund. It was before this image that when still a youth, he made his vow of perpetual chastity, and commending himself to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, chose her for his spouse, and in pledge of his engagement placed on the finger of her image, a ring on which he had caused to be inscribed the Angelic Salutation. He wore another similar ring on his own hand, and was buried with it. From the time of this solemn consecration of himself, as he confessed on his death-bed, he sought her assistance in all his necessities, and never failed to find her a refuge in trouble, and a deliverer in all temptations. The Lady chapel attached to St. Peter’s church, was built by him for the use of himself

and his pupils, and in it he was accustomed daily to recite the Canonical Hours, together with the office of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin.

Concerning the image at Cambridge, a story is given in a MS., preserved in the Vatican Library, of a certain young student named William *Vidius*, who led an irregular kind of life, but nevertheless never laid aside his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and was accustomed daily to honour her by reciting certain prayers before her image. This youth had a certain comrade named James who shared his room; and one night as they slept, James was awakened by the groans of his companion, whom he observed was trembling and covered with sweat, as though suffering great terror. With some difficulty he succeeded in rousing him, and enquired what was the matter. 'Well is it for me,' exclaimed Vidius, 'that I have been used to honour the image of the Blessed Virgin! But for that I should have perished eternally. For this night I have stood before Christ the Judge who required of me a strict account of my life. The enemy was already about to seize my soul, when I beheld the Blessed Mother of God, and according to my custom, invoking her aid, she put the devil to flight, and by her intercession obtained for me a further respite.' Perhaps the image here alluded to, may have been that venerated in the church of the Black Friars at Cambridge which stood on the spot now occupied by Emmanuel College, concerning which John Bishop of Rochester writes to Cromwell, that 'there hath of long time been an image of Our Lady in the said house of friars, the which hath had much pilgrimage unto her, and specially at Sturbridge fair; and for as much as that time draweth near, and also that the said prior cannot well bear such idolatry as hath been used to the same, his humble request is that he may have commandment by your lordship to take away the said image from the people's sight.'

In investigating the scanty notices left us of these old English sanctuaries, what is preserved of their history is obviously nothing in comparison with what has perished. There is scarcely a parish in England which has not some trace or relic of the old devotion: in one place, we find 'Our Lady's

well,' still preserved in the parish churchyard; in another, as at Woodbridge in Suffolk, local tradition speaks of the famous image which formerly stood in the wall of the church, 'to which much pilgrimage was made.' Indeed, if we may judge from the indications to be found in topographical histories we should be disposed to conclude that the English in Catholic times were distinguished in a very remarkable degree by their fondness for this species of devotion.* Many, perhaps most of the localities thus visited, were rendered venerable by possessing the relics, and perhaps the incorrupt body, of one of our native saints, as that of St. Edmund at Bury, St. Waltheof at Melrose, St. Etheldreda at Ely, or St. Editha at Wilton. In some the history of the pilgrimage is preserved, whilst almost all record of the events which sanctified the locality, have passed from the mind of man. Thus the little parish of St. Martha's on the Hill, near Guildford in Surrey, takes its name from a hill still called Martyrs' Hill. Whence it derived this appellation is now unknown, but from a notice in the register of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, we learn that it was in his time a place of pilgrimage, for we find him granting forty days' indulgence to all who should resort to the parish church 'on account of devotion, prayer, pilgrimage, or offering; and who should then say the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and Credo,' and contribute an alms to the maintenance of the same. The love of going on pilgrimage was so innate in the English people, that neither the Reformation nor the Great Rebellion sufficed to quench it, and Catholics were still found hardy enough to visit some of their favourite sanctuaries, such as the tomb of St. Richard of Chichester, to which many were yearly in the habit of resorting on his feast, long after the Restoration. Memorials are found in many places of inns and wayside chapels, used by pilgrims, as at Chapel House, and Deddington in Oxfordshire, and on the former spot a skeleton was some years ago dug up, together with a silver crucifix and beads. How significant are such notices as those that occur in the pages of

* The ancient form of the Bidding Prayer included a recommendation of all pilgrims—'Ye shall pray for all pilgrims and palmers, that Almighty God may give them grace to go safe and to come safe, and give us grace to have part of their prayers, and they part of ours.'

Leland, when he remarks how he ‘passid in a wood by a chapel of Our Lady, wher was wont to be gret pilgrimage,’ or of the chapel of Our Lady of Grace, ‘that standeth a litel from the shore *sum time haunted by pilgrims*;’ or how ‘there is still gret pilgrimage to Our Lady’ made in the village of Burgham. What is there now to attract the visitor in what Tanner calls ‘the little barren island of Hilbury’ off the coast of Cheshire? Yet in ancient times faith and devotion beautified these barren rocks, for here the monks of Chester had a cell, and frequent pilgrimages were made to ‘Our Lady of Hilbyri.’

London visitors to Margate and Ramsgate will doubtless remember the smaller watering-place of Broadstairs, lying between the two, where a few years ago might still be seen, near the pier, the remains of an ancient building, converted into a dwelling-house, but formerly the chapel of Our Lady of Bradstow, where her image was held in such veneration that ships as they sailed past the coast, were used to lower their top-sails to salute it. Among the many parish churches dedicated to ‘St. Mary,’ how many are to be found associated with legends and traditions which still keep a certain hold on the memory of the people. Thus at the village of St. Marychurch, near Torquay, a tradition survives that the first Christian church built in that parish was begun, not on the hill now occupied by the parish church, but in a valley lying to the west. Something however, it is said, always obstructed the progress of the work, and the builders found, that as much of the walls as they raised during the day was sure to be pulled down by some unseen hand during the night.

At last a voice in the air is said to have been heard singing the words:

If St. Mary’s build ye will,
Ye must build it on the hill;

and in consequence they were induced to begin their work over again, and build the church on the brow of the hill where it now stands. We may add one circumstance to this legend, which is not without its interest. The old church was a few years ago pulled down and replaced by a larger and more splendid, though certainly less picturesque structure.

Nothing of the ancient erection was left standing except the tower, which is also doomed ere long to be replaced by one more in proportion with the present edifice. But at the very time that the last remains of the old parish church are thus disappearing, a *new* St. Mary's is rising on the same hill; and the steeple of the Catholic church will, it is hoped, greet the eyes of the villagers by the time that the old grey tower has entirely vanished from their gaze.

Scotland no less than England was at one time rich in sanctuaries of Our Lady, among which were those of Scone, Dundee, Paisley, Jedburgh and Melrose. The practice of devout pilgrimages was held in great esteem by the Scottish Catholics, and notwithstanding the savage character of the border warfare, English pilgrims to Melrose were never known to be molested. Riccardi in his history of Our Lady's Sanctuaries, quotes a treaty of peace between two Scottish clans, by the terms of which the rival chieftains bind themselves to make four pilgrimages to different Scottish shrines, for the repose of the souls of those of their enemies who had been slain by them in battle.

Hector Boëthius in his history of Scotland relates an incident which occurred at Haddington, during the time when the whole country was overrun by the victorious forces of Edward III. There was in that town a chapel of Our Lady, known as the White Chapel, in which a highly venerated image of the Blessed Virgin was preserved. An English soldier having entered the chapel for the purpose of plunder, seized this image with all its ornaments, and was in the act of carrying it off, when a large rood of very great weight which hung suspended from the roof, broke from its supports and fell, crushing the sacrilegious robber to death, but injuring no one else within the building. He adds that the image had before this been regarded as miraculous, but that after this event the devotion of the people towards it greatly increased.

The history of another Scottish image, that of Aberdeen, is yet more interesting, from the fact (unique, we believe, in the records of our British sanctuaries), that it was preserved from sacrilege at the time of the Reformation, and is still an object

of religious veneration. It was of wood, and originally occupied the cathedral church of St. Macarius, whence, after having been venerated for nearly 600 years it was removed in the early part of the sixteenth century by Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Aberdeen. That pious prelate had succeeded in erecting a bridge of seven arches over the river Don, and after the custom of Catholic times constructed a chapel on the first arch of his bridge, in which he deposited the holy image. A little fountain sprang up hard by, the waters of which were believed to effect miraculous cures, and a certain heretic having endeavoured to desecrate the fountain by casting filth into its pure and limpid waters, was seized on the spot by a strange malady which caused him publicly to acknowledge that he was struck by the hand of God. After this event, to preserve the holy image from any new profanation, it was carried back to its former resting-place, and Gavin, whose palace adjoined the cathedral, passed no day without visiting it. It is said that once whilst praying before the image, a voice came from it announcing to the good prelate the approach of evil times. 'Gavin,' it said, 'thou art the last bishop of this city who will have the happiness of being saved.' This terrible prediction is assigned to the year 1520, and the corruption of manners which in Scotland preceded the loss of faith seemed to indicate a sad fulfilment of the words. Gavin himself enjoyed a high reputation for sanctity, and after the Reformation his body was disinterred by the heretics, and found whole and incorrupt, so that being struck with fear they did not dare to touch it.

The holy image was fortunate enough to escape the sacrilegious hands of the Scotch Reformers. It was first of all saved from their fury by some pious Catholics, but afterwards came into the possession of the Protestants, who were always withheld from destroying it, from the dread inspired by the judgments which seemed to fall on all who attempted to lay hands on it. Thus, a band of furious zealots having once entered the house where it was deposited, determined to make an end of this last relic of popery, they were struck with blindness, and although the image was quite exposed to view, they could not succeed in finding it. On the other hand the family which

gave it shelter received abundant benedictions ; it seemed to bring a blessing with it, as the ark had done formerly to the household of Obededom, and at length so great an impression was made on the minds of this family, that abjuring their errors they were reconciled to the Church, a crowning grace which they failed not to attribute to the intercession of Our Lady.

After a time William Laing, a Scottish Catholic, who is styled Procurator to the King of Spain, succeeded in obtaining possession of the image, which he deposited in a suitable place in his house, and we are assured that though the heretics often made their way thither, they never succeeded in beholding it. At last in 1623, Laing entrusted it to the captain of a Spanish ship, with orders to convey it to Flanders, and place it in the hands of the Infanta Isabella, then Governess of the Low Countries.* After narrowly escaping the dangers of a frightful tempest, and engaging in a combat with some Dutch pirates, the ship cast anchor off Dunkirk. The commandant of that port, hearing of the miraculous character attributed to the image, was at first disposed to seize possession of it and send it to Spain ; but he was turned from this purpose by a dangerous malady which suddenly attacked him, and from which he continued to suffer until he placed the precious deposit in the hands of Father de los Rios, an Augustinian monk in the suite of the Infanta, who happened then to be at Dunkirk. The archduchess gave orders for the image to be at once removed to the chapel attached to her palace at Brussels, and charged William Laing to collect all the documents relating to its previous history, and the miracles connected with it.

In 1626 F. de los Rios petitioned the archduchess to allow the image to be transferred to the newly-built church of the Augustinian Fathers, and its translation to this new resting-

* Isabella was daughter of King Philip II. of Spain, and married in 1598 Albert, son of the Emperor Maximilian II. Philip made over to them the sovereignty of the Low Countries, and their government is praised even by Protestant writers for its justice and clemency. After the death of her husband, in 1621, Isabella continued to rule alone, until her death, which took place in 1633.

place was effected on May 3 of the same year with the utmost pomp. All the clergy, nobility, and magistracy of the city were present, and Pope Urban VIII. granted a plenary indulgence to all who should assist at this ceremony. The procession set out from the palace amid the ringing of bells and the thunder of artillery, and could scarcely make its way through the vast throng of assembled spectators. The pupils of the college, directed by the Augustinian Fathers, rode on horseback at the head of the procession, carrying richly-ornamented banners; then followed the various confraternities, religious orders, and collegiate bodies, and the holy image at last appeared, decked for the occasion with the Infanta's jewels, and covered with a robe glittering with gold and precious stones. The Infanta herself followed on foot surrounded by the chief officers of her court, and on reaching the Augustinian church, Mass was celebrated for the *good success* of Her Highness, and the image was solemnly deposited in the chapel prepared for it.

The festival lasted altogether ten days, during which several remarkable graces and miraculous cures were obtained, some of which are narrated very circumstantially by the historians of this sanctuary. A confraternity of Notre Dame de Bon Succès was formed, the Infanta herself being the first to be enrolled in it; whilst Mary de Médicis, the consort of Henri Quatre, inscribed her own name, kneeling as she did so before the sacred image.

When the revolutionary troubles of the eighteenth century broke out in Brussels, the Augustinians were stripped of their goods and obliged to leave their convent. But Our Lady of Aberdeen was once more saved from desecration, and singularly enough was again committed to the guardianship of British hands. An English Catholic gentleman of the name of Morris kept the image in safe custody until the year 1805, when by a decree of the Emperor Napoleon, the church of the Augustinians was annexed to the parish of Finisterre, and the Catholic worship having been restored, the image was installed in its former resting-place. Here however it did not long remain, for in 1814 the Protestants having obtained a grant of this church, Our Lady's image was removed to the parish church of Finisterre and placed in a niche by the side of St.

Joseph's altar. In 1852, M. Van Genechten, curé of the parish, caused a chapel to be erected to receive it, and on May 12, 1854, the confraternity of Notre Dame de Bon Succès was restored by authority of the Archbishop of Malines, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Brabant accepting the office of honorary provost.*

We have called this history unique, because in point of fact no other instance is on record of any of our ancient images having been preserved down to our own time as objects of popular devotion. History however tells us of one holy image which was rescued after falling into the hands of the heretics; its restitution forming one of the articles of peace extorted by a French king from the sacrilegious ministers of Edward VI.

The story is too remarkable to be omitted here. The celebrated image of Our Lady of Boulogne was believed to have been miraculously brought to that town in the seventh century. Early in the eighth century, it was visited by devout pilgrims from all lands, among whom we find the name of St. Lugal, an Irish archbishop. Godfrey of Boulogne made an offering to this holy image, of the royal crown of Jerusalem, which he himself would never wear, and his mother Ida built the church in which this treasure of the Boulognese continued to be venerated up to the calamitous days of 1793.

Our Lady of Boulogne was always an object of special devotion on the part of the English. Many of her kings came hither in person, and in 1264 the English bishops held a council here at which St. Louis and the Papal legate assisted, with the view of mediating between Henry III. and his barons. Here too in 1308 was celebrated with extraordinary pomp the marriage, doomed to so unhappy an issue, between Edward II. of England, and Isabella, the she-wolf of France; on which occasion very rich offerings were made to Our Lady's shrine; and when a few years later the queen led a hostile force against her unhappy husband, and deprived him of his crown and his life, the French knights who had joined her standard

* It is understood that the proposal has been made to restore the image of Our Lady of Good Success to the Scottish Catholics of Aberdeen; and that a petition to this effect is at this moment under consideration at Rome.

and who believed themselves only fighting in defence of her just rights, on their return to their own country made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to Our Lady of Boulogne.

John King of France believed his deliverance from his long captivity in England to have been obtained in consequence of a vow made by him to visit this shrine in pilgrimage, and on landing at Calais he walked from thence to Boulogne to accomplish his devotions; and during the reign of Henry V. when the English held possession of the country we find the brave earls Talbot of Shrewsbury and Beauchamp of Warwick making magnificent offerings—Talbot presenting a robe of cloth of gold adorned with massive golden lion's heads, whilst Warwick offered a golden statue of the Blessed Virgin with the dragon under her feet. An English merchant also enriched the treasury with a turquoise of such extraordinary value that it was placed in the cross known as the Great Cross, and was considered its greatest ornament. The enormous riches of this sanctuary were further increased in 1514 by the offering of an English princess of Tudor blood. Mary, sister to King Henry VIII., being affianced to Louis XII. of France, landed at Boulogne, on her way to her husband's court, and immediately proceeded to Boulogne, where she left an arm of massive silver, enamelled with the armorial escutcheons of France and England. Indeed the Boulogne treasury seems to have rivalled that of Loreto in wealth. It possessed more than a hundred golden reliquaries, eighteen great silver statues, and a prodigious quantity of diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, to say nothing of hearts, arms, legs, and other votive offerings, the French sovereigns paying every year the tribute of a golden heart to Our Lady as to their feudal sovereign. All these riches were doomed to fall into the hands of King Henry VIII. and his brutal soldiery. In his younger days Henry had visited the church as a pilgrim* and knelt before Our Lady's shrine in company with his gallant rival

* We have before noticed Henry's pilgrimage to Walsingham, and Justus Lipsius, in his curious history of Notre Dame de Halle, informs us that the name of the English king was inscribed on the roll of Our Lady's sodality in that city, in the following terms; '*Rex Angliæ, cum uxore et liberis*;' whence he is supposed to have visited Halle also.

Francis I. But in 1544 war having broken out between the two countries, the English laid siege to Boulogne which was betrayed into their hands by some Italian mercenaries, and the town being taken, was given up to pillage. The soldiers hastened to the cathedral, and having made themselves masters of the riches which had accumulated there during nine centuries, they seized the sacred image itself and carried it back with them to England as a trophy of war. The chapel of Our Lady was entirely destroyed, and the church itself converted into an arsenal. The town remained in the hands of the English for five years and a half, during which time the garrison was continually swept away by pestilence, and had to be constantly recruited, until at length no soldiers could be found willing to accept the service, and they had to be sent over from England in chains.

In 1550 Boulogne was restored to France, and Henry II. after making his solemn entry into the town, accomplished a vow which he had made two years previously by offering a new image of solid silver to replace the old miraculous statue which had been carried to England. Magnificent as the new image was, it did not console the people of Boulogne for the loss of their old one, and the king therefore caused an article to be inserted in the treaty of peace concluded between him and the government of Edward VI., according to which the latter prince was required to give back Our Lady of Boulogne as the Philistines in old time had been compelled to restore the ark of Israel. The English ministers were not at that time in a position to refuse any demands made on them, and the treaty, a most humiliating one to the national pride, was reluctantly agreed to. The image of Our Lady was sent back to France, together with all the ordnance stores captured at the taking of the town, and the clergy of Boulogne going forth in procession conducted their treasure back to the cathedral, where it soon drew to its feet new crowds of pilgrims.

Henrietta Maria, the unfortunate Queen of Charles I., was the last of our English sovereigns whose name appears on the list of those who made their offerings to this venerable image. It escaped the desecration of the Calvinists, and was at first even spared by the revolutionary hordes in 1791, when they

destroyed every other relic of religion in the city. But this act having drawn on them the accusation of moderation, they proceeded to vindicate themselves of the odious charge by publicly burning the sacred image, and putting up the cathedral to be sold by auction. It was purchased together with Our Lady's chapel by some speculators, who caused the venerable edifice to be pulled down and utterly demolished, and thus, as it was hoped, every memorial of the old devotion was swept away. In 1820, however, an enterprising priest, the Abbé Haffreingue, succeeded in purchasing the site of the old cathedral and devoted himself to the task of its restoration. Persevering in his design for forty years in spite of a thousand difficulties, he lived to see his noble efforts amply rewarded; for not only have we in our days witnessed the consecration of the new cathedral, but we have beheld the ancient pilgrimage revived, and Our Lady of Boulogne yearly attracting to her altar crowds of devout worshippers.

CONCLUSION.

THE examples which have been cited in the foregoing pages chiefly exhibit the devotion to Our Lady in either its modern or its mediæval aspect. But it would not be difficult to trace back the same devotion into far earlier ages, and present the reader with illustrations gathered from the sixth, the fourth, or the second centuries differing but little in their general character from those with which we have hitherto been engaged. Not merely do the writings of the fathers lay down those dogmas of faith which form the root and groundwork of our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, but history and tradition reveal to us the devotion itself as practised even in the desert and in the catacombs. However far we travel back we are met by facts and legends attesting the universal belief in the power of Our Lady's intercession, and this power is represented as often miraculously displayed. The annals of the Eastern Empire are as rich in such narratives as those of Western Christendom; and a few examples may be selected as best showing the identity of the ancient with the modern devotion, all of which shall be chosen from the first six centuries. Thus, Evagrius in his Ecclesiastical History, speaking of the expedition of Narses into Italy in the year 552, tells us, on the report of those who accompanied him in that campaign, that as he prayed the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, prescribed the time when he should attack the forces of Totila and desired him not to gird himself for the battle until he had received a sign from heaven. This incident is noticed by Gibbon, and strange to say, without a sneer. The devotion of Narses to the Blessed Virgin was so well known among his troops that when they celebrated his victories, they were accustomed to crown themselves with garlands and sing hymns in honour of the Mother of God. And

the sentiment which led them to ascribe their success to her favour and intercession was equally shared by the soldiers of his great contemporary Belisarius, whose conquest of the Arian Vandals of Africa was so commonly regarded as a grace obtained from the hands of Mary, that the Emperor Justinian in token of his gratitude to her erected three churches in her honour at Leptis, Ceuta, and Carthage.

The remarks made by Baronius on this subject are worthy of our notice. 'It seemed,' he says, 'as if the Blessed Virgin and the Emperor Justinian engaged in a sort of contest which should be the most prodigal in the interchange of their good offices. He defended her against the attacks of the Nestorians who sought to deprive her of her supereminent title of the Mother of God, and she advanced him to the imperial sovereignty; and because he erected numberless temples to her honour, and particularly the magnificent basilica at Jerusalem, it was given to him to subdue all Africa, for which benefit he showed his gratitude by the erection of several other sanctuaries.' *

Of Leo I., one of the worthiest of the Christian emperors, a story is repeated by Nicephorus, to the effect that his future elevation to the empire was made known to him when still a simple soldier, by Our Lady herself, who appeared to him as he was charitably assisting a poor blind man. The devotion of his predecessors Marcian and St. Pulcheria is spoken of by all historians. They it was who erected the three great churches in Constantinople, known as the Chalcoopratum, the Blaqueria, and the Hodegus. In the Chalcoopratum was preserved the girdle of Our Lady; in the Blaqueria, some bands that had been wrapt around her sacred body at her entombment, and a picture, often borne before the emperors in processions of triumph; and in the Hodegus, another yet more celebrated picture, which was said to have been painted by St. Luke, and which had been sent to Pulcheria from Jerusalem, by the Empress Eudoxia. It received the title of the Hodegetria, and the custom became established for the Greek emperor to come here before setting out on any military expedition, in

* Baronius, An. 450.

order to take leave of Our Lady and ask her blessing. In sieges the Hodegetria was often carried to the walls and deposited in those quarters most exposed to danger, and solemn thanksgivings for any prosperous event were generally offered in this sanctuary. St. John Damascene in one of his homilies informs us that on occasion of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, St. Pulcheria applied to the prelates there assembled, and particularly to Juvenal Bishop of Jerusalem for relics of the Blessed Virgin which she might deposit in these churches, and that Juvenal in his reply declared to her that 'it was the true and constant tradition of the Church that He who had been pleased to take flesh of Mary without prejudice to her virginity was pleased also after the death of that beloved mother, to preserve her immaculate body free from all corruption and to transport it to heaven.'

We may summon the Emperor Julian the Apostate as a most trustworthy witness to the universality of this devotion among the Christians of his time. It was one of his charges against them, that '*they ceased not to call Mary the Mother of God.*'* The death of this great oppressor of the Church is declared by St. Amphilochius (or whoever was the author of the life of St. Basil that bears his name) to have been announced beforehand to that saint by the mouth of Our Lady. For as he prayed with all his people and clergy in a certain sanctuary dedicated to her honour on Mount Didymus in Cappadocia, and implored her protection of the Church from the tyrant Julian, she appeared to him seated on a throne, and made known to him the approaching death of the emperor which took place shortly afterwards.

If we go back to the very foundation of the Christian empire we find Constantine immediately after the Council of Nice dedicating his newly-founded capital to the Mother of God, as is related by more than one historian.† And when the basilica afterwards dedicated to her was in course of erection, a story is preserved of her appearing to the chief architect and directing him how to raise the enormous pillars that supported the roof. Granting that the fact be of no great authenticity, it shows

* Jul. Op. t. 2. p. 159, 262.

† Niceph. l. vii. c. xxvi. Zonabaras, Annal. l. iii.

that the belief in such apparitions was not strange to the Christians of the time of Constantine.

If anecdotes of this sort are to be found scattered over the early annals of the Christian empire, they are no less discoverable in the lives of the saints belonging to the same period.

The hermits of the East, it seems, were accustomed in the sixth century to have in their cells images of the Blessed Virgin, before which they burnt lamps and candles. Thus Abbot John who lived in a cave near Jerusalem, was accustomed when about to set out on a pilgrimage to the holy places, to address the Blessed Virgin in the following terms: 'Holy Lady, Mother of God, since I am about to travel a long way, take care of thy lamp, and do not let it be extinguished, for I go trusting to have thy help for a companion on my journey.' And the lamp, we are told, continued to burn miraculously in his absence.* In another story a hermit is reproved by Abbot Theodore, when tempted by the devil to put out of his cell the image of Our Lady and the Holy Child.† In the same century flourished the famous St. Dorotheus and his disciple, St. Dositheus, the latter of whom was converted to Christianity in a singular manner, when visiting the holy places of Jerusalem. He beheld there a certain picture representing the torments of hell, and as he stood with his eyes riveted on it, he beheld at his side a Lady of majestic aspect with a resplendent and beautiful countenance, who explained to him the eternal truths, and made known to him what rule of life he should follow if he desired to escape those torments.

A somewhat amusing story is related thus by the Abbot Ciriacus in the 'Spiritual Meadow.' On a certain day, he says, he beheld Our Lady, accompanied by St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, passing by the door of his cell; and on his inviting her to enter she refused, and regarding him with a severe countenance asked him why he kept *her*

* F. Dalgairns' 'Introduction to Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,' p. li.

† Prat. Spir. c. xlv. ed. Cologne, 1583. The editor (Lipoman) adds a note: '*Nota hoc capitulum adductum fuisse in septimâ Synodo [Nic. II.] et approbatum.*' See also chapters xlvii., xlviii., and lv. of the same work for examples of early devotion to Our Lady.

enemy concealed in his cell. In great distress and perplexity as to what this vision might mean, he took up a book which had recently been given him by a priest of Jerusalem named Isychius, and found written at the end, one of the treatises of the heretic Nestorius. At once understanding the riddle, he ran in all haste to Isychius with the book under his arm: 'Here,' he said, 'take back your book; it has done me more harm than it will ever do me good.' 'And pray what harm has it done you?' asked Isychius. Griacus related what had occurred. 'Is it so?' replied his friend; 'then I will have you to know that the enemy of Mary shall not remain in my cell any more than in yours,' and with that he tore out the obnoxious treatise, and cast it into the fire.*

Two celebrated conversions belonging to the fifth century, are closely connected in their circumstances with the devotion of which we are speaking. The first is that of Theophilus, œconomus or temporal administrator of the church of Adana, in Cilicia. His history has been quoted as genuine by St. Bernard, and a vast number of ecclesiastical writers, and was originally written by Eutychian, one of his own clergy, who declares that he relates only what he has seen with his eyes and heard with his ears. Theophilus, being deposed from his charge, apostatised from the faith, and sold himself to the devil; then touched with remorse he implored the aid of the Mother of God and obtained pardon and release from his terrible bondage through her intercession, as he prostrated before her image, 'expecting from her the hope of salvation.' The other example is that of St. Mary of Egypt whose death took place about the year 430. Her story has always been held authentic, and is too well known to require more than a brief recapitulation. After leading an abandoned life for many years, Mary finds herself at Jerusalem, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross,† but being mysteriously

* Prat. Spirit. c. 46.

† This feast, though now observed in commemoration of the recovery of the Cross from the Persians by Heraclius, in 627, was celebrated at Jerusalem from the year 335.

withheld from entering the church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the precious relic is exposed for veneration, she enters into herself and conceives a horror for her past life. Suddenly she perceives above her a picture of the Holy Virgin. 'Fixing my eyes upon it,' she says, 'I addressed myself to the Holy Virgin, begging of her by her incomparable purity to succour me defiled with such a load of sin as to render my acceptance the more acceptable to God. I besought her that I might be suffered to enter the church to behold the sacred wood of redemption; promising from that moment to consecrate myself to God by a life of penance, and to take her for my surety in this change of heart.'

After this prayer she is able to enter the church, and having kissed the pavement with tears, and given thanks to God for his incomprehensible mercy, she returns to the picture of the Mother of God, and falling once more on her knees before it, she prays her to be her guide. 'After my prayer,' she says, 'I seemed to hear this voice, If thou goest beyond the Jordan thou shalt there find rest and comfort. Then weeping and looking on the image I begged of the Holy Queen of the world that she would never abandon me.' And the next morning, 'recommending herself to the Holy Virgin,' she crosses the Jordan and begins her wonderful life of penance; in the course of which she is often attacked by the tyranny of her former passions, but obtains deliverance by continually raising her heart to the Blessed Virgin, who never fails to assist her by her powerful protection.

It is not to be doubted that the devotion of the faithful to the Blessed Virgin took a much fuller expansion after the council of Ephesus had triumphantly defended her privileges against the attacks of Nestorius. The very fact that her dignity as Mother of God had been called in question by that heretic, rendered every devout Catholic eager to give testimony to his own fidelity, and to multiply the exterior signs of his filial homage. The possible danger of encouraging idolatry which up to that time may have imposed a certain reserve on the manifestation of their devotion no longer existed, for the struggle with idolatry had ended; nothing therefore checked the free expression of those sentiments

which had been outraged by the impiety of Nestorius. But the difference to be observed in this devotion as it existed before and after the council of Ephesus, was not one of principle; and if we desire to know what was the precise feeling of the faithful on this point, at the very outset of the controversy we find it expressed in that cry of horror with which the people of Constantinople fled from the church in which Dorotheus of Marcianopolis uttered his blasphemous anathema against those who should give to Mary the title of the Mother of God. In fact, if one may so say, the Nestorian heresy was condemned by the populace before it was condemned by their rulers. It was notoriously a novelty, so directly opposed to the Christian instinct and tradition, that the first rumour of it created a popular commotion. This is sufficient to show that the devotion was not created by the council of Ephesus; and, as Socrates * the historian observes, Nestorius by objecting to the title of Theotocos as applied to Mary, displayed *his ignorance of the ancient fathers*, which he never seemed to have read, for they certainly were not afraid to use this title. He quotes particularly Origen, who in his commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans, discourses at large on this matter, and alleges the cause why Mary is called the Mother of God. That she was so called, and that not accidentally but continually, is shown by the words of Julian the Apostate, already quoted, and by the writings of St. Dionysius of Alexandria, and of St. Athanasius, both of whom are reckoned to have used this expression eight or nine times, and by the famous anathema of St. Gregory of Nazianzen, who, writing against the Apollinarists, says, 'If any one does not believe Mary to be the Mother of God, he is separated from the Divinity.' Moreover, it will be remembered that Nestorius was not the first heretic who had earned the unenviable title of 'the enemy of Mary.' The previous generation had been successively assailed by the heresies of Helvidius, Jovinian and Vigilantius, and had repudiated their impiety with a prompt indignation, little differing from that excited by the teaching of Nestorius. They were denounced by all the great writers of the day, and in

* lib. 7. c. xxxii.

particular by St. Jerome, who may be regarded as the mouth-piece of the Church during the latter half of the fourth century. There is something very suggestive in the nature of the errors broached by this notable band of heresiarchs. All, as we know, attacked the doctrine of Our Lady's perpetual virginity, and attempted at the same time to overthrow the entire ascetic system of the Church. Jovinian, the Luther of his age, railed at the Catholic doctrine of merit, made light of the counsels of perfection, and, monk as he was, opposed asceticism no less by his example than by his teaching. He cast off his monk's habit, dressed in silk, curled his hair, and addicted himself to wine and good living. No wonder that such a man should have been found among the enemies of Mary. Vigilantius was a man of kindred spirit; he did not like the veneration of relics, which he called nothing better than 'old bones,' and those who venerated them he designated 'ashes-worshippers.' The custom of burning candles in the churches before these relics was a great grievance in his eyes, and he was curious to know how God could be honoured by the consumption of these 'miserable wax candles!' We are not at all surprised to find these sectaries distinguishing themselves by their hostility to the Blessed Virgin, so as to earn for themselves the title of 'Anti-Marianites,' and their hostility is not without its value, as testifying to the fact how very marked and widely-spread the devotion to her had become, when they took on them to rail against it.

The lives of many other fathers of the Church, contemporary with or anterior to St. Jerome, furnish us with the like testimony. I am not aware that there is any incident in the life of St. Augustine directly connected with our present subject, unless indeed we reckon as such the vision granted to St. Monica, which a recent writer has inserted in his collection of the early apparitions of Our Lady. She is said to have appeared to him clothed in black and wearing a girdle, in memory of which was founded the Augustinian confraternity of the Girdle of Our Lady. But the lives both of St. Martin and St. Ambrose contain allusions to supernatural favours received by them from her hands.

Thus, in the beautiful life of St. Martin written by Sulpicius

Severus, we read that the Blessed Virgin frequently appeared to him in his cell, together with other saints; and the MS. life of St. Ambrose preserved in the Ambrosian library at Milan records a miraculous event which gave rise to the sanctuary of the Holy Mountain of Varese. In the reign of Valentinian II. the excesses of the Arians compelled the Catholics of those parts to take up arms in their own defence, and a combat was fought in the neighbouring plains during which St. Ambrose remained on this mountain recommending the issue of the struggle to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. She is said to have appeared to him and to have promised him the victory, and the altar on which he afterwards offered the Holy Sacrifice in thanksgiving, remained on the hill as a memorial of the event. Another sanctuary which also bears the name of the Holy Mountain, is that of Oropa, where is preserved a rude cedar-wood image, brought from the East by St. Eusebius of Vercelli in 361, when he returned from the exile into which he had been driven by the Arian Emperor Constantius. Two other images were deposited by him at the same time in the churches of Crea and Cagliari, and the Madonna della Consolata at Turin is likewise believed to have been presented by him to Maximus, bishop of that city.

Sozomen tells us that in the church or oratory at Constantinople called the Anastasia, in which St. Gregory of Nazianzen was accustomed to gather his little flock, many miracles took place, and that the Blessed Virgin frequently appeared there. The confidence exhibited by this great saint in her patronage and in that of all the saints is expressed in many of his writings, and it is he who relates the history of St. Justina to which we shall presently refer, and declares her deliverance to have been wrought through the power of the Mother of God. And although we are speaking here less of the doctrine of the fathers touching this devotion than of facts illustrative of its practice, one cannot pass over the words of St. Epiphanius, who calls the Virgin Mother, 'the mediator between earth and heaven,' and denounces the heresy of the Antidicomarianites, not only as 'a sacrilegious impiety,' but as

a 'monstrous novelty;' an important expression, as it shows that the veneration paid to her in the fourth century, rested on the tradition of preceding ages. But let us take one step further back; what shall we say of St. Ephrem, the doctor of Edessa, whose hymns, but recently brought to light,* bear witness to his belief in the Immaculate Conception; whose writings contain the actual words of so many of our own devotions, such as the *sub tuum præsidium*, and the well-known versicle, *Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata*; who salutes Our Lady as his queen, his sovereign, his life, his light, his hope, and his refuge, holding the second place next to the Divinity, the Mediatrix of the whole human race; and who in his terrible sermon on the last judgment paints to us the separation of the just from the wicked, and places in the mouths of sinners that doleful cry: 'Farewell, ye saints and servants of God; farewell parents, farewell children; farewell prophets, apostles, and martyrs; farewell Lady, Mother of God; you have prayed much for us, that we might be saved, but we would not!' And the author of these words died in 378, and was the son of parents who had confessed the faith in the persecution of Diocletian. Such a witness brings this devotion very close to the age of martyrdom; but in the person of St. Methodius of Tyre we have one who was a martyr himself. St. Methodius does not merely write of the Blessed Virgin, but he addresses her in the language of invocation. And it is he who appeals in support of this devotion to the example of Our Lord Himself. 'We all owe debts to God,' he says, 'but to thee He Himself is indebted who has said, Honour thy father and thy mother. And that He might fulfil his own law, and exceed all men in its observance, He paid all honour and grace to his own mother.'† St. Methodius suffered martyrdom at Chalcis during the last persecution, about the year 312.

* See the *Carmina Nisibena*, published in 1866, from a MS. in the British Museum. Important extracts from the editor's preface are given by Father Dalgairns in the book before referred to, p. lviii.

† S. Meth. 'Serm. de Sim. et Anna.' In this sermon S. Methodius several times bestows on Our Lady the title of *Theotocos*, or Mother of God.

In the reign of St. Sylvester, the very first pope who governed the Church after the period of martyrdom, we find a miraculous incident recorded, the cessation, namely, of a terrible pestilence, which was attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. And in gratitude for this favour St. Sylvester (as Baronius relates) dedicated to her honour in the Roman forum a church known as *Libera nos a pœnis*. This must have been before the year 335, which was that of St. Sylvester's death. Miraculous graces granted to the invocation of Our Lady appear both in the authentic lives and the less authentic legends belonging to the age of martyrdom. Thus the Greek acts of St. Catherine represent her as converted to the faith by the sight of a picture of the Holy Virgin and her Divine Son, and as afterwards presented to Our Lord by his Blessed Mother, who entreats Him to accept Catherine as his spouse. Then we have the legend of the two saints Julian and Basilissa martyred under Maximin in 312, who on the day of their nuptials consecrated themselves to God by a vow of chastity and devoted themselves to the service of the sick, when Jesus and Mary visibly appeared to them, surrounded by saints and angels, who say aloud, 'Victory to thee, Julian, victory to thee, Basilissa!' And St. Gregory of Nazianzen relates the history of St. Justina, who was delivered from the diabolic conspiracy framed against her by Cyprian the magician on invoking the Blessed Virgin, and whose martyrdom took place about the year 304.

Earlier still, in 240, we have the celebrated vision of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, who, as St. Gregory of Nyssa relates, received an exposition of the orthodox faith from the dictation of the Blessed Virgin. And this incident, it may be observed, cannot be classed among pious legends, but has always been respected as absolutely historical. This perhaps is the very earliest example on record of any apparition of Our Lady, or supernatural grace received from her hands, but it is very far from taking us back to the earliest proof that is to be found of the devotion rendered to her in the Church. The catacombs, which bear witness to so many other points of primitive faith are not silent on this matter. The Commendatore De Rossi,

whose perfect candour and honesty no less than his unrivalled ability will be admitted by critics of every creed, has published a selection in chromo-lithography of a few out of the numerous pictures of Our Blessed Lady which we find in subterranean Rome.

In the explanatory text with which he illustrates these paintings, he informs us that 'whereas he believes some of them to belong almost, if not quite, to the *Apostolic age*, there are at least a score which cannot be assigned to a later date than that of Constantine.'

The latest of those which he has published is the well-known figure of Our Blessed Lady and the Holy Child in the cemetery of St. Agnes, which belongs probably to the middle of the fourth century; another, in the cemetery of St. Domitilla, he unhesitatingly assigns to the third; whilst another, from the cemetery of St. Priscilla, in which the prophet Isaias stands before her pointing to a star over her head, he considers to belong to the very beginning of the second, if not to the first century. The testimony of these paintings is at once most ancient and authentic. Of the examples alleged before, some we freely admit are but legendary tales, nor are they brought forward as claiming the authority of graver history. Their value lies in this, that they show the legendary records of the Church to have borne witness equally in every age, to the existence of this devotion. Study those records when we will, they tell us the same tale, nor will its earlier chapters be less supernatural, or, as it may be termed, less marvellous, than those of later date. Legends moreover are not necessarily false because they claim less critical evidence than history; and even where they exhibit a certain colouring of romance and fiction, they may nevertheless embody a fact, or convey accurate information as to the belief and devotion of the age to which they belong. Still more must they carry weight when we find them strictly harmonising with the teaching of authentic narratives. The prejudice which leads us to imagine that visions and apparitions of Our Lady, and tales of her direct interference in human affairs, are but the mythical produce of middle age credulity, is startled, to say the least, when it encounters precisely similar stories told and be-

lieved by saints belonging to the first five centuries of the Church.

This harmony of belief is a grave and indisputable fact, for it proves that the devotion of the faithful, like their creed, is in all its main features the same now as it was in the beginning, and as it shall be in ages to come.

And now what conclusion shall we draw from such facts and narratives as have been here collected? They present us with a devotion which appears in all times to have manifested itself by means of certain exterior acts of worship of a particular character, such as the veneration of certain pictures and images in preference to others and the frequentation of favourite sanctuaries, under the belief that such spots were more highly favoured than others, and that prayers offered there have some special likelihood to be heard. Such a belief, though by some it may be qualified as superstitious, is not, it must be owned, without its Scriptural warrant; for God Himself by the mouth of Moses promised that He would 'choose a place for his people, that his name might be therein.'* And the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple was that the Lord would hearken to the supplications of his people Israel and grant 'whatsoever they should pray for in this place.'† And there was but one part of Bethsaida that we know of in Jerusalem into which 'an angel of the Lord descended at certain times, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under.'‡

If then we admit that some places may be more favoured than others in this respect, and that the disposition to regard with reverence any spot once marked as the scene of special grace is both reasonable in itself and supported by many scriptural examples, the practice of pilgrimages will flow from such a feeling as its inevitable consequence. In the foregoing pages it has been shown that this practice has not been confined to any particular age, or country, or class of men, but that it is

* Deut. xii. 11.

† 3 Kings viii. 30.

‡ St. John v. 4.

rather one of those indigenous flowers of the faith, which is native to the soil and springs from it spontaneously without care of culture. It is a part of that natural language by which men give expression to their religious sense, when the heart charged with emotions of gratitude or veneration seeks relief in some exterior act. If all do not feel the need of such exterior expression in an equal degree, the mass of men, and especially the simpler orders, will always be sensible of this instinct of the heart, which prompts them to give outward manifestations of their interior worship. There is a necessity on them which will not suffer them to rest without doing something to pour forth their love ; a homely feeling, far removed from the transcendental, yet one which seems to have something in it akin to the words of the Psalmist, ‘What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me ?’

Worship of this sort will for the most part express itself in acts entailing sacrifice. The scoffer may smile at the spectacle which presents itself in not a few foreign churches where a somewhat unsightly candelabrum stands before some favourite image for the convenience of any devout soul who wishes to burn a candle. They may question the use or the ornamental character of some of the offerings to be seen suspended before a popular Madonna ; and in precisely the same spirit they may criticise the reasonableness of pilgrimages. But these and many other popular expressions of Catholic piety are intelligible enough as outpourings of that instinct of which we have spoken, which desires to give to God of that which has cost us something ; the offering may be homely, but the spirit which dictates it is truly royal, and to him who so offers may be spoken the words of Areuna the Jebusite : ‘The Lord thy God receive thy vow.’

It may no doubt be urged that the particular form of popular devotion of which we have here been speaking is liable to grave abuses ; that for one who undertakes a pilgrimage from a motive of piety, ten are guided by curiosity ; that even in what we call the ages of faith St. Boniface had to complain not merely of the disorders committed by the English pilgrims of his time but of positive scandals, and that the words of Thomas

a Kempis have passed into a proverb, 'Qui multum peregrinantur, raro sanctificantur.' Even St. John of the Cross, when speaking of pilgrimages in his own beautiful style, points out the abuses to which they are liable, and advises that they should not be made at seasons when the holy places are the resort of a crowd. 'God,' he says (speaking of the devotion to holy images), 'for the greater purification of this devotion when He grants graces and works miracles, does so generally through images not very artistically adorned, so that the faithful may attribute nothing to the skill of the artist. And very often Our Lord grants his graces by means of images in remote and solitary places. In *remote* places, that the pilgrimage to them may stir up our devotion and make it more intense. And in *solitary* places, that we may retire from the noise and concourse of men to pray in solitude like Our Lord Himself. He who goes on a pilgrimage will do well to do so when others do not, even at an unusual time. When many persons make a pilgrimage I would advise staying at home, for in general men return from such expeditions more dissipated than they were before. And many become pilgrims for recreation rather than devotion.'* But the abuse of a thing may be freely admitted without prejudice to its sanctity. As well might we argue against the frequentation of churches as a means of sanctification, because out of the crowds that fill our places of worship, many may be found there who display irreverence or vanity. And because the pious author first quoted also observes (no doubt with equal justice), 'pauci ex infirmitate meliorantur,' we are not therefore disposed to doubt that sickness has been the instrument of sanctification to innumerable souls.

Acknowledging however the general truth conveyed in the proverb, and admitting that the external performance of popular devotions will sanctify no one, and that there exists in many souls a certain restlessness and love of excitement which requires to be starved rather than to be gratified, we cannot nevertheless refuse to number pilgrimages, devoutly performed, among the 'means of holiness' which the Church offers to her children. Perhaps there is no external exercise better fitted

* 'Ascent of Mount Carmel,' c. xxxv.

than this to kindle within us the flame of piety. A journey on foot, undertaken from a religious motive, through localities but scantily furnished with comforts and conveniences, has in itself a certain element of penance, and powerfully brings to the heart the thought of Him who was once a wayfarer on the hills of Galilee and Judea, and who had not where to lay his head. To men of pensive mood the act in which they are engaged is a prolonged meditation ; it reminds them that they are 'pilgrims and strangers,' 'sojourners on the earth as all their fathers were : ' it does violence to some of those conventional usages and maxims to which our own countrymen are so much enslaved ; to the social idolatry of home comforts, which we renounce for a time, neither for the sake of profit nor pleasure, but only that we may renew the freshness of our spiritual life at some sweet fountain-head of piety ; and it induces a most happy forgetfulness of our own self-importance when we find ourselves one in a vast crowd gathered out of many lands, between whom and ourselves there exists no tie save that of Catholic brotherhood.

None who have ever witnessed one of those annual solemnities celebrated at any of the popular sanctuaries described in the preceding pages, can fail to have been impressed by one feature in the scenes that presented. *Of whom* is the vast concourse, numbering its tens of thousands, chiefly, if not altogether, made up ? Beyond all question, of the poor. The names of princes and cardinals are no doubt inscribed in the records of these sanctuaries ; an archduchess has presented a golden lamp to one Madonna, an emperor, his jewelled diadem to another ; but those many thousands who every year pour forth from the valleys of Switzerland or the Tyrol, and take the road-staff in hand to Einsiedlen or Zell ; those parishes headed by their curés who throng the roads to Fourvière or La Salette, those devout Roman pilgrims who about Christmas-time may be seen in companies of twenty or thirty, kneeling for long hours before the Confession of St. Peter, they are all of the peasant class. *Beati pauperes* we exclaim,—it is the common people who press the closest to their Lord. Nor can we behold that dense mass of humble worshippers, without the vivid conviction that we are gazing on the very materials

out of which will mainly be gathered the great multitude which no man shall be able to number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples, and languages, who shall one day stand before the Lamb, and before his throne, as we now see them gathered to worship at his altar.

A pilgrimage will be of incalculable benefit, if it produce no other result than that of realising to the soul how vast a place is filled in the Church by the humble classes. They are her very bone and sinew. In the world they in a manner escape our notice ; and whilst we stand agape at the tinsel finery of wealth or genius, generations of those for whom are reserved the seats of the fallen Seraphim pass unheeded before our eyes. It is a revelation to watch the confessionals and the altar rails of a venerated sanctuary, and mark who they are, who succeed one another there in never-ending procession : as in the days of the Apostle, they are ' not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble ;' and as in the days of Our Lord Himself, we may say '*pauperes evangelizantur.*'

There is another reflection which suggests itself in a very consoling way to those who follow on the pilgrim's track. How universal is the providence of God ! We *know* indeed that his care and his love are for all his children, but in how vivid and sensible a manner do we realise this as we wander through the obscure valleys and villages of France, of Belgium, of Poland, of Catholic America, and everywhere meet with the footprints of his grace. And this thought links itself to one which is more specially connected with the sanctuaries of the Madonna. We have before now heard the number and variety of these sanctuaries spoken of as tending to confuse the minds of the ignorant, and even to give them the impression that there may be more objects than one of their filial devotion, and that the Madonna of Loreto is a distinct personage from the Madonna of Montserrat. But we must confess that the extraordinary multiplication of Our Lady's sanctuaries, has always appeared to us one of the most remarkable features in the history of popular devotion. Other saints are venerated more or less in particular localities ; they are invoked as patrons of this city or that province ; but the

patronage of Our Lady is universal. And nevertheless the *maternal* character of her protection is shown precisely in this, that at the same time that it is universal, it is particular also. Not a religious Order but has its own peculiar legend, whereby it claims Our Lady as its special patroness. Not a Christian nation but would have us believe that Our Lady regards them as her peculiar clients. If the golden fleurs-de-lys were borne in honour of Notre Dame de France, England in old time boasted of being the 'dowry of Mary.' If the Carmelites glory in calling themselves the brothers and sisters of the Blessed Virgin, the Cistercians find equal satisfaction in wearing their white habit in her honour, and the Dominicans and Franciscans alike console themselves with the heavenly visions which show their departed members gathered under the shelter of her mantle. It is the same with her sanctuaries, which cluster so thickly in every country where the faith is lingering still. No province, we had almost said no village of Christendom, but has its own Madonna; and linked with that holy image some legend, or succession of legends, which marks that spot as a chosen resting-place selected for the outpouring of her maternal favours. Thus every child in the vast family regards her as his *own* mother; she is bound to each one by some individual tie; and as we take our way from Boulogne to Fourvière, from Fourvière to Laus, through the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, or among the five hundred and fifty-three sanctuaries which the Spanish peninsula alone still boasts of possessing, we feel that Mary is indeed 'the mother of us all,' that the devotion rendered to her is no vague offspring of the imagination, but something which attests her active, personal and universal care; so that by her devout clients, her protection is felt almost as a presence, not visible indeed to outward sense, but easily discernible by the affections. Such was the devotion rendered by our Catholic forefathers to her,

The cedre hi in Libanus y-spred,
Above all bankis :

and in their language, so sweetly blending familiarity with reverence, we will gladly close these pages,

Lady, Seint Mary, fayre and gode and swete,
For love of ye teres that thi self lete,
Gyve me ye grace on erthe my sines for to hete,
And that I may in Heven sitten at thi fete.

Lady, Seint Mary, wolde that thi wille it ware,
Thou art ful of joye, and I ful of care,
O bring me out of sinne, and let me fal ne more,
And gyve me grace on erthe sinne to rewe sore.

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